NATION

Andhra anti-Maoist crackdown leaves 13 dead

≫ Page: 4 ≪

BUSINESS

Adani wins nod for $1.53B takeover of Jaiprakash Associates

≫ Page: 7 ≪

SPORTS

2nd Test against SA: Gill arrives in Guwahati with Team India

≫ Page: 8 ≪

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SALAR
DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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Nitish to take oath as Bihar CM for 10th time today

Nitish elected NDA's legislature leader, Samrat to head BJP

NEW DELHI, 19 NOV

JD(U) chief Nitish Kumar will be sworn in as Bihar chief minister for a record 10th time on Thursday, after the NDA's sweeping victory in the assembly elections. Preparations at Patna's Gandhi Maidan are nearly complete, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and several senior NDA leaders expected to attend. Multiple pandals have been set up for VIPs, and security has been tightened, with over three lakh people anticipated.

Kumar resigned on Wednesday and submitted his letter to Governor Arif Mohammad Khan, accompanied by Union minister Chirag Paswan, RLM leader Upendra Kushwaha and Uttar Pradesh Deputy CM Keshav Prasad Maurya. The governor asked him to continue as caretaker CM until the new government is formed.

Nitish Kumar was unanimously elected leader of the NDA legislature party, with the BJP choosing Samrat Choudhary as its legislature party leader and Vijay Kumar Sinha as deputy leader. BJP observer Maurya, along with Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal and former Union Minister Sadhvi Niranjan Jyoti, attended the meeting. NDA allies continued lobbying for cabinet berths through the day. The new cabinet is expected to include 16 BJP ministers and 14 from JD(U), besides Kumar. Sources said BJP's Prem Kumar is likely to be Speaker, while the Deputy Speaker post may go to JD(U). Five to six new faces from the main NDA parties are likely.

JD(U) leaders expected in the cabinet include Bijendra Prasad Yadav, Vijay Kumar Choudhary, Shrawan Kumar, Sunil Kumar, Lesi Singh, Sheila Mandal, Madan Sahni, Ratnesh Sada, Mohammad Zama Khan, Jayant Raj, Umesh Singh Kushwaha and Ashok Chowdhary. BJP may retain most outgoing ministers while adding new faces such as Anand Mishra, Rana Randhir, Gayatri Devi and Vijay Kumar Khemka. Smaller allies — LJP, HAM-S and RLM — will also be represented. —*PTI*

Union Minister Dharmendra Pradha with JD(U) supremo Nitish Kumar and BJP leader Samrat Choudhary after a meeting of Bihar's NDA MLAs in Patna on Wednesday **PHOTO: PTI**

Deported from US, Anmol Bishnoi arrested in Delhi

NEW DELHI, 19 NOV

A Delhi court on Wednesday remanded Anmol Bishnoi, accused in the murder of NCP leader Baba Siddique, to 11 days' custody of the National Investigation Agency (NIA).

Anmol, brother and close aide of jailed gangster Lawrence Bishnoi, was produced at Patiala House Courts around 5 pm amid heavy security after being deported from the US, where he had been detained since November last year. He was arrested by the NIA upon landing in India.

Special Judge Prashant Sharma granted 11 days' custody against the NIA's request for 15 days, and directed that he be produced again on 29 November.

Special Public Prosecutor Rahul Tyagi said Anmol is a "key member" of the terror-gangster syndicate and possesses critical information about its operations. The NIA told the court that custodial interrogation was required to uncover the syndicate's modus operandi, funding channels, associates and details of Anmol's escape from India.

Security was heightened in and around the court complex, with RAF personnel deployed. Media access to the proceedings was barred.

Anmol is wanted in multiple high-profile cases, including the killing of Siddique, the firing at actor Salman Khan's residence in April 2024, and the murder of Punjabi singer Sidhu Moosewala.

Absconding since 2022, he is the 19th accused arrested in connection with the Lawrence Bishnoi-led terror-gangster network. —*PTI*

Gangster Anmol Bishnoi at the Patiala House Court **PHOTO: PTI**

TN man stabs girl to death for saying no to his proposal

RAMESHWARM, 19 NOV

A 21-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly stabbing a Class 12 girl to death in broad daylight while she was on her way to school in Cherankottai on Wednesday.

The attack reportedly followed her repeated rejection of his romantic advances. The accused, Muniyaraj, had allegedly been stalking the girl and pressuring her to accept his proposal. Her father, a fisherman, had warned him to stop.

Enraged, Muniyaraj confronted her on a public road and stabbed her multiple times, killing her instantly.

Passersby alerted police, who recovered the body and sent it for post-mortem.

Political leaders, including AIADMK, PMK and BJP, condemned the murder, criticised the DMK government over women's safety, and demanded maximum punishment for the accused. —*PTI*

More on Page 3

PHOTO: PTI

MGNREGS persondays see sharp drop: Report

NEW DELHI, 19 NOV

A 25.6 per cent drop in the number of persondays generated under MGNREGS was recorded in 2025-26 compared to the last two fiscals.

Meanwhile, the trend of high deletions was reversed during the previous fiscal, and up to September this year, a report said on Wednesday. The report 'MGNREGA Implementation in India: Insights and Trends, April-Sept 2025,' published by LibTech India said that the number of worker deletions witnessed in 2022-23 and 2023-24 was reversed in 2024-25, and it continued this year too. However, only 132.5 crore persondays were generated between April and September this year nationally, which is a drop of 11.7 per cent from 150.1 crore in the same period in 2024-25, the report said. —*PTI*

SC flags 'deplorable' Talaq-e-Hasan practice

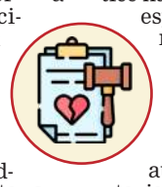
NEW DELHI, 19 NOV

The Supreme Court on Wednesday deprecated the practice of Muslim husbands authorising lawyers or other individuals to issue Talaq-e-Hasan notices to their wives, questioning whether a "civilised modern society" should permit such a system. The bench of Justices Surya Kant, Ujjal Bhuyan and N Kotiswar Singh said it may consider referring the challenge to the validity of Talaq-e-Hasan to a five-judge Constitution Bench.

Talaq-e-Hasan allows a man to dissolve a marriage by pronouncing 'talaq' once a month over three months. The court said the issue was not about striking down a religious practice but ensuring it aligns with constitutional ethos. It sought brief notes from all parties on the types of talaq recognised in Islamic practice and the legal questions that may arise.

Hearing petitions filed by several Muslim women, including journalist Benazeer Heena, the court said the practice has serious consequences, especially for women in remote areas with limited access to justice. Heena told the court she was unable to prove her marital status after her husband authorised someone else to issue the divorce notice, even as he remarried.

The court also allowed the All India Muslim Personal Law Board and Samastha Kerala Jamiyyathul Ulama to intervene and sought submissions from NCW, NHRC and NCPCR. The matter will be heard next with the husband directed to appear. —*PTI*



SC strikes down 2021 Tribunal Reforms Act

NEW DELHI, 19 NOV

The Supreme Court on Wednesday struck down key provisions of the 2021 Tribunals Reforms law regarding the appointment, tenure, and service conditions of tribunal members and presiding officers, saying that "Parliament cannot simply override judicial decisions by re-enacting laws" with tweaks.

The SC made scathing remarks against the Centre for bringing back the same provisions of the ordinance in the law.

"We must express our disapproval of the manner in which the Union of India has repeatedly chosen to not accept the directions of this court on the very issues that have already been conclusively settled through judgments. It is indeed unfortunate that instead of giving effect to the principles laid down by this court on the question of the independence and functioning of tribunals, the legislature has chosen to re-introduce provisions that reopen the same constitutional debates under different enactments," a bench comprising CJI BR Gavai and Justice K. Vinod Chandran said in the judgment.

It allowed the plea of the Madras Bar Association and others against the law and invalidated several contentious provisions including the one which prescribed a minimum age of 50 years for appointments in tribunals.

It also set aside the fixed tenure of four years for chairpersons and members and the mandate for the Search-cum-Selection Committee (SCSC) to recommend a panel of two names for each vacancy, which was seen as giving the executive undue discretion.

Writing judgment for the bench, the CJI said the Act stands on two identical, already rejected premises. —*PTI*

- The court said Parliament cannot simply override judicial decisions by re-enacting laws" with tweaks. It scolded the Centre for bringing back the same provisions of the ordinance in the law.

SC says no quota for promotee judges in higher service

NEW DELHI, 19 NOV

The Supreme Court on Wednesday declined to grant a separate quota for promotee judges in the Higher Judicial Service, holding there was no "common malady" of disproportionate representation to justify such a reservation. A Constitution bench led by Chief Justice BR Gavai said mere "discontentment" or "heartburn" cannot warrant creating an artificial sub-classification within the cadre, adding that Selection Grade and Super Time Scale postings are based on merit-cum-seniority, not on lower-court service length. The bench also noted that in-service officers already have adequate avenues for advancement. —*PTI*

EX-JUDGES, VETERANS FLAY RAGA OVER VOTE CHORI ATTACKS

NEW DELHI, 19 NOV

A group of 272 eminent citizens, including former judges, retired civil servants and veteran armed forces officers, have criticised Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for what they termed his "impotent rage born of repeated electoral failure" directed at the Election Commission (EC).

In a joint statement, they accused the Leader of the Opposition of persistently attacking the EC with "uncouth rhetoric", alleging "vote theft" and vowing to "hound" officials after retirement, without filing any formal complaint supported by a sworn affidavit.

Signatories include National Green Tribunal Chairperson Adarsh Kumar Goel, former judges S N Dhingra, Hemant Gupta and Rajiv Lochan, former RAW chief Sanjeev Tripathi and former NIA director Y C Mod. They said Gandhi's conduct reflected frustration rather than a substantive charge, and claimed that sections of the Congress, other opposition parties, left-leaning NGOs and ideologically driven commentators had amplified similar allegations. The statement said such rhetoric collapses upon scrutiny, noting that the EC has publicly detailed its SIR methodology, conducted court-supervised verification. —PTI

THE REAL MONEY HEIST

Men posing as tax officials rob ATM cash van, flee with Rs 7 cr in B'luru

BENGALURU, 19 NOV

In a dramatic daylight heist, unidentified men posing as Income Tax officials intercepted an ATM cash van in the city on Wednesday and fled with an estimated Rs 7 crore, police said. The robbery, believed to be the first of its kind in Bengaluru in recent years, took place near Ashoka Pillar as the van was transporting cash from a JP Nagar branch.

According to preliminary investigations, the gang arrived in a car carrying a Government of India sticker and stopped the CMS cash vehicle, claiming they needed to verify documents. They then forced the van's staff — along with the cash — into their car, drove towards Dairy Circle, and later dumped the staff before escaping with the money.

Police are examining footage from more than 50 CCTV cameras to track the vehicle's route and identify the suspects. Home Minister G Parameshwara said the government was treating the incident "very seriously" and had obtained "certain leads."

Police examine the crime scene **PHOTO: SALAR**

Bengaluru Police Commissioner Seemanth Kumar Singh said the robbery occurred under the Siddapura police station limits. While the loss is estimated at Rs 7 crore, he noted the figure is being verified as the van driver "has not shared accurate information." The entire city has been placed under nakabandi, with multiple teams on the ground and technical units monitoring movement across Bengaluru. Two DCPs and a Joint Commissioner are leading the probe.

Singh said the suspects forced the transfer of the cash from the CMS van into their vehicle, but the exact number of assailants and whether the van's security staff were armed remains unclear. "Information was not shared immediately. There was a delay... we are looking into all angles," he added. Home Minister Parameshwara said it was concerning that the robbers appeared to have prior knowledge of the cash movement. "Who gave them information? We don't know yet. Such an incident should not have happened," he said. "We will find out whether they are from Karnataka or outside."

The heist sparked political accusations, with BJP leader R Ashoka alleging that "looting has become part of Brand Bengaluru" under the Congress government. "There is no protection for people's money even in banks," he claimed. State BJP president BY Vijayendra said the robbery had created widespread fear and asserted that criminals "have no fear of the law" under the current regime, demanding immediate arrests. —*PTI*

EAM S Jaishankar interacts with members of the Indian community in Moscow, Russia **PHOTO: PTI**

India opens two new consulates in Russia

MOSCOW, 19 NOV

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Wednesday inaugurated two new Indian Consulates General in Russia, marking a significant expansion of India's diplomatic outreach. The consulates, opened in Yekaterinburg and Kazan, aim to strengthen trade, tourism, economic, scientific, technological, academic and cultural ties between the two countries. Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Andrey Rudenko and India's Ambassador Vinay Kumar were present at the ceremony.

Jaishankar described the occasion as an important moment in India–Russia relations and acknowledged the Russian government's support. He highlighted Yekaterinburg's status as Russia's "third capital" and a major industrial center, and Kazan's role as a multicultural hub that connects Russia with Asia. The new missions are expected to support the Indian diaspora, including thousands of students in both regions, and contribute to the shared goal of increasing bilateral trade to USD 100 billion by 2030.

During his visit, Jaishankar met members of the Indian community in Moscow and paid floral tributes to Mahatma Gandhi. Meanwhile, Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong is scheduled to arrive in Delhi on Wednesday night. She will hold talks with Jaishankar on Thursday at Hyderabad House before departing later that evening. —*PTI*

AAGYAVISION wins MeitY funding nod

BENGALURU, 19 NOV

AAGYAVISION, a deep-tech startup incubated at the Indian Institute of Science, on Wednesday, said it has received financial approval from the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology under the Design Linked Incentive scheme. With this, the City-based firm becomes the 24th company to secure support through the Product Design Linked Incentive component. It had earlier received Electronic Design Automation tool assistance under the scheme. Calling the DLI scheme a key initiative to strengthen India's semiconductor design ecosystem, CEO Suchismita Banerjee said the company's radar-on-chip technology, built using indigenous semiconductors, is enabling advanced imaging and sensing solutions. CS Murali of the Foundation for Science, Innovation and Development said the approval underscores the growing maturity of India's semiconductor ecosystem. —*PTI*

Ensure Sabarimala pilgrims' safety: State to Kerala

BENGALURU, 19 NOV

The State government has sought Kerala's cooperation to ensure the safety and smooth movement of devotees from the state undertaking the annual Sabarimala pilgrimage from November to January, amid reports of heavy crowds. State Chief Secretary Shalini Rajneesh wrote to her Kerala counterpart, AJayathilak, on Wednesday, requesting steps to ensure the pilgrims' safety. She urged the authorities to streamline vehicle movement and to regulate crowds along routes used by State pilgrims. She also sought medical aid posts, emergency response services, and coordination with medical authorities. Adequate policing and safety measures, particularly at sensitive or high-density locations, were also recommended. The letter requested for help desks with multilingual support, including Kannada. —*PTI*

JD(S) to celebrate silver jubilee on 21 & 22 November

MYSURU, 19 NOV

The Janata Dal (Secular) will mark its silver jubilee with celebrations here on 21 and 22 November. Announcing the programme, JD(S) working president and former minister SR Mahesh, along with MLA GD Harish Gowda, said events will be held across all districts. Mahesh said the anniversary aims to reach people and highlight schemes introduced by former Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda and former chief minister HD Kumaraswamy, adding that MLA GT Devegowda is expected to join the celebrations. He noted that JD(S), as a regional party, offers an alternative to Congress and BJP. Harish Gowda said leaders will use the jubilee to strengthen cadres ahead of upcoming local body elections. —*Salar News*

Ready to implement 75% reservation, says CM

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah during a programme marking the golden jubilee of the 1st report on the status of Backward Classes in Bengaluru on Wednesday
PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

BENGALURU, 19 NOV

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah indicated that the State government was willing to increase the reservation quota for backward classes to 70-75 per cent.

Speaking at an event on Wednesday to commemorate 50 years of the LG Havanur Backward Classes Commission report, CM said "Our government is ready to accept and implement the economic, social, and educational report. It is also interested in increasing the reservation quota to 70-75 percent. As long as I have breath, as long as I am in politics, I will stand for social justice."

Former CM Devaraj Urs had called the Havanur Report the Bible of the backward classes, Siddaramaiah noted. Havanur submitted the report to Urs in 1975. "Those who have benefited from the caste system are the ones strengthening it," Siddaramaiah said. "The backward classes still haven't come out of the slave mentality." He added that Rahul Gandhi's ideological commitment had pushed the Centre into announcing a nationwide caste census.

"The other day, he asked me too, What happened to your census?" the Chief Minister said. Siddaramaiah also tore into the BJP-RSS, calling them the enemy of backward classes.

"What can one say to them when the backward classes, including Dalits and the Shudra community, keep joining their enemies, the BJP - RSS - ABVP, for selfish reasons even though they know that the BJP-RSS ideology is the enemy of the backward classes." Congress General Secretary Jairam Ramesh on X praised the Havanur Commission, calling it "the turning point for social justice in Karnataka." —*Salar News*

Govt launches Rs 1,000 cr LEAP for tech, innovation

Priyank says LoIs worth Rs 2.6K cr signed at Tech Summit

BENGALURU, 19 NOV

Minister Priyank Kharge on Wednesday unveiled a range of initiatives—LoIs, MoUs and skilling partnerships—aimed at making the State a global technology and talent hub.

He highlighted two new programmes under the State government's flagship Local Economy Accelerator Program (LEAP)—Elevate Next (Deeptech) and Elevate Beyond Bengaluru.

"LEAP is a five-year, Rs 1,000-crore initiative designed to strengthen emerging clusters outside Bengaluru by providing access to infrastructure, funding and sector-specific support, while reinforcing Karnataka's leadership in advanced and disruptive technologies," Priyank said on the sidelines of the 28th Bengaluru Tech Summit 2025.

Priyank said Letters of Intent worth Rs 2,600 crore were signed with leading innovators and enterprises, committing significant investments to Karnataka.

"These LoIs, expected to generate 3,500 direct and indirect jobs, were signed across the semiconductor, EV battery and biotech sectors," he said.

According to a statement, Elevate Next (Deeptech), starting 1 January will offer targeted grants to support cutting-edge research and development. Elevate Beyond Bengaluru, launching on 1 February, aims to accelerate entrepreneurial growth in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities.

Under the programme, 40 start-ups under Elevate Next will receive grants ranging from Rs 50 lakh to Rs 1 crore, while 50 start-ups under Elevate Beyond Bengaluru will be provided grants of up to Rs 50 lakh.

The government further announced NIPUNA Karnataka, a mission to skill 4,000 youth in partnership with major corporate employers.

Meanwhile, Minister NS Boseraju unveiled the concept of 'India's first Quantum City', proposed at Hesaraghatta, aimed at positioning the State at the forefront of the global quantum technology landscape.

Visitors on the second day of the three day Bengaluru Tech Summit 2025, at BIEC in Bengaluru
PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

> Minister Priyank Kharge on Wednesday unveiled a range of initiatives—LoIs, MoUs and skilling partnerships—aimed at making the State a global technology and talent hub.

Speaking at the Quantum Technology Roundtable during the Tech Summit, the minister said that under the Karnataka Quantum Mission, the State has announced a Rs 1,000 crore investment.

The upcoming Quantum City will serve as the centrepiece of this mission, according to a statement.

"The city will house advanced research laboratories, a Quantum Hardware Park, cryogenic testing facilities, quantum cloud clusters, and a deep-tech startup zone," it said. —*PTI*

TUSSLE OVER POWER

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivkumar during an event marking the birth anniversary of former PM Indira Gandhi, at Bharat Jodo Bhavan in Bengaluru, Wednesday
PHOTO: PTI

Cannot be KPCC President forever, laments DKS

BENGALURU, 19 NOV

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Wednesday indicated that he may have to step down as the State Congress President, but assured party workers that he will remain "in the frontline leadership" of the party.

Speaking at a party event to mark former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's birth anniversary, Shivakumar said, "Whether I'm around or not is immaterial. But I want to set up 100 party offices during my tenure."

When some party workers expressed concern over his uncertain tenure as state Congress chief, he said, "I cannot hold the post permanently. It has already been 5.5 years, and in March, it will be six years." "Others should be given an opportunity. But I will be in the leadership. Don't worry, I will be at the frontline," he added.

Shivakumar was appointed Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) President in May 2020.

He said he intended to resign as party President upon becoming Deputy Chief Minister in May 2023, but was asked by AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge and senior leader Rahul Gandhi to continue for some more time.

> **No one can be permanent here.... I'm not someone who runs away... Where I am is not important.... Don't lose hope.... I will work as long as the Gandhi family and the Congress President want me**
>
> -DK Shivakumar, Deputy Chief Minister

Shivakumar's remarks come amid speculation about a change in the chief ministerial post as the Congress government approaches the halfway mark of its five-year term this month, a period referred to as the "November revolution.

Senior party leaders have also raised questions about the KPCC leadership.

PWD Minister Satish Jarkiholi and former Minister KN Rajanna, considered close to CM Siddaramaiah, have expressed aspirations for the post.

After the event, Shivakumar briefly interacted with press saying he was not avoiding responsibility.

As he spoke, some supporters shouted slogans calling him the "next CM". —*PTI*

THE CITY'S MOST AWAITED FASHION EXTRAVAGANZA IS BACK!

Step into a world where style meets sophistication at the Hi Life Exhibition, bringing together an exquisite collection of couture, designer wear, jewellery, accessories, and lifestyle creations — all curated from the country's leading designers.
Discover the latest trends, timeless craftsmanship, and statement looks that define modern elegance.
Join us for three fabulous days — 21st, 22nd & 23rd November at The Lalit Ashok, Bengaluru.
Experience fashion, luxury, and lifestyle like never before —only at Hi Life Exhibition!

Enggs laud tunnel road project

BENGALURU, 19 NOV

The Institute of Engineers (India) wrote a letter to Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar saying that the proposed tunnel road was the only way to decongest the City's traffic.

The proposed 16.7 km project between Hebbal and Silk Board has drawn flak from the Opposition BJP and experts alike over its feasibility, cost and the damage it could cause to the environment, namely Lalbagh Botanical Garden, which it will go under.

However, the Institute said that tunnel roads were "more suggested" for the environment.

The letter, written by the Institute on 11 November and shared by Shivakumar on 19 November, also noted that Union Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari had said that the "only solution" to solve the City's traffic congestion was to construct "multi-layered and tunnel roads." The letter said that tunnel road could hold around 25 lakh vehicles, thereby reducing traffic. —*Salar News*

ISRO tests bootstrap start for CE20

BENGALURU, 19 NOV

ISRO has successfully tested the 'boot-strap mode start' of the CE20 cryogenic engine, which powers the upper stage of the LVM-3 rocket. The agency said it has, "perhaps for the first time in the world," demonstrated starting a gas-generator cycle cryogenic engine without any auxiliary start-up system for single-start missions.

The 10-second test was conducted in vacuum conditions at the ISRO Propulsion Complex, Mahendragiri, on 7 November. The CE20 engine is already cleared for Gaganyaan missions.

Typically, the engine relies on tank pressure and a small stored-gas system to ignite. However, future missions will require multiple in-flight restarts to place payloads in different orbits. Each restart currently needs an auxiliary system, making the ability to self-build thrust through a boot-strap start crucial, ISRO said. —PTI

Drunken woman techie assaults 2 in C'ballapur

C'BALLAPURA, 19 NOV

A Bengaluru based woman techie has caused commotion besides causing injuries to two youths on the Bengaluru Hyderabad National high in Chikkaballapurr.

The middle-aged woman, Rimbika Devi was reportedly seen driving her two wheeler in a haphazard manner near Chitravathi in Chikkaballapur on 18 November, thus affecting the traffic. When Nikhil and Narasimha Murthy, residents of Koduru Byraganahalli, tried to stop her, she entered into a tussle. She exchanged blows with them and attacked them with a sharp object. While one youth sustained injuries on his forearm and neck, the other incurred minor bruises.

Soon onlookers intervened and brought the situation under control. The woman is a resident of Yelahanka in Bengaluru and worked with an IT firm. When the police arrived on the spot, Devi claimed that the youths had attacked her. The latter denied the charge. She also tried to give a slip to the police when she along with the youths were being taken to the police station for questioning.

The police have registered two cases based on the complaints of both parties involved. An investigation is underway. —Salar News

TOURISM SECT APPEALS

Govt urged to restart Bandipur tiger safaris

MYSURU, 19 NOV

The tourism sector has urged the Forest Department to restart safaris in Bandipur Tiger Reserve and Nagarahole Tiger Reserve.

In a letter to the Forest Minister Eshwar B Khandre, stakeholders led by Mysuru Travels Association President BS Prashanth said that tourism activities have collapsed after the safaris were stopped. The State government had paused safaris owing to the increasing human-wildlife conflict.

The letter comes a day after staff from various hotels and resorts staged a dharna at HD Kote, seeking government intervention.

Prashanth stated that Mysuru - Chamarajanagar district's tourism promotion is dependent upon wild safaris in Bandipur and Nagarhole Tiger Reserve. A large number of tourists who visit Mysuru also prefers wildlife safari in the two regions located very close to Mysuru, he wrote. Many stakeholders including hotel owners, travel operators have invested crores of rupees for construction of hotels, resorts and other hospitality sectors, Prashanth noted. The tourism sector also provided opportunities for thousands of travel operators, tourist guides and agents. Now, the stoppage of Safaris has affected their livelihood. The stakeholders provided all protection to its tourists during jungle safari rides, he stated.

In the wake of three tiger-related deaths in a span of 15 days along the fringes of Bandipur Tiger Reserve, the State government had ordered the immediate suspension of safari operations at both Bandipur and Nagarahole Tiger Reserves, which draw many tourists every day. Khandre also imposed a State-wide ban on trekking in human– wildlife conflict zones. —*Salar News*

'Winter session may discuss N K'taka Statehood demand'

BELAGAVI, 19 NOV

The issue of a separate North Karnataka state is likely to be discussed during the upcoming winter session of the Suvarna Vidhana Soudha in Belagavi from 8 to 19December, Speaker UT Khader announced on Wednesday

Speaking to press after verifying the arrangements made for the session, he said the House is likely to take a call on whether or not to recommend the long-standing demand for a separate North Karnataka state. However, he termed raising the issue itself "inappropriate".

A detailed discussion on issues concerning North Karnataka has been scheduled for the first, third and fourth days of the session. "If MLAs raise questions related to the region, the government is obligated to respond," Khader said.

The Speaker said inter-departmental meetings have already been held to ensure smooth conduct of the session.

Facilities will be arranged for visitors attending the proceedings. Only 500 students will be permitted to witness the session each day, and prior approval from the respective DDPI will be mandatory for entry. Additionally, 30 students will be selected for a comprehensive study programme covering the entire session, including motivation classes and sector-specific exposure based on their interests. —*Salar News*

Bandh disrupts Imphal, Bhagwat to visit Manipur

IMPHAL, 19 NOV

RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat will visit Manipur from 20–22 November, his first trip since ethnic violence erupted two years ago, leaving over 260 dead and thousands displaced. His visit, part of the RSS centenary celebrations, includes meetings with citizens, entrepreneurs and tribal leaders, though he is not scheduled to visit relief camps. The trip coincides with tensions over the Sangai festival, due to begin on 21 November after a two-year gap. A 24-hour bandh called by a proscribed group partially shut markets, schools and offices across Imphal valley. IDPs and civil society groups are also boycotting the event, arguing it is inappropriate during ongoing suffering. The government insists the festival is vital for economic revival. *—PTI*

HC allows release of Farhan Akhtar's film '120 Bahadur'

NEW DELHI, 19 NOV

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday cleared the release of Farhan Akhtar's film '120 Bahadur', scheduled for 21 November, dismissing a plea that challenged its CBFC certification for allegedly distorting historical facts. The court noted it was too late to alter the title or theatrical release and accepted the producers' assurance that the names of the 120 Rezang La soldiers appear in a tribute at the end of the film. The petitioners may verify this after release, with any corrections to be made in the OTT version, where all soldiers' names and regiments must be listed. The PIL, filed by the Sanyukt Ahir Regiment Morcha and families of soldiers, alleged the film erases the collective valour of the Ahir soldiers of Rezang La. *—PTI*

SC halts CBI probe into TN BSP leader's murder

NEW DELHI, 19 NOV

The Supreme Court on Wednesday stayed a Madras High Court order that had transferred the investigation into the murder of former Tamil Nadu BSP president K Armstrong to the CBI. A bench of Justices JK Maheshwari and Vijay Bishnoi was hearing the Tamil Nadu government's appeal against the High Court decision, which had also quashed the state police charge sheet. The apex court had earlier stayed the quashing of the charge sheet but not the transfer of the probe. The counsel for the state police, denied claims that investigators had withheld case records from the CBI, arguing the chargesheet was detailed and the High Court acted "casually". Armstrong was hacked to death on 5 July, 2024 in Chennai. *—PTI*

Banerjee responds to Bose's FIR with police complaint

KOLKATA, 19 NOV

The feud between TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee and West Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose intensified further when Banerjee lodged a police complaint countering the FIR filed by Bose. Banerjee is seeking police action on the grounds of criminal conspiracy and acts endan-gering India's sovereignty, unity and integrity. The complaint came less than 24 hours after Bose, in his FIR, slapped him with several sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (formally IPC) criminal law code, including crime to assault or wrongfully restrain the President or a Governor of a state with the intent to prevent them from exercising their lawful powers, as well as to commit acts that endanger the sovereignty, unity, or integrity of the country. *—PTI*

Al Falah chairperson had reasons to flee India: ED

Agency says he got Rs 415 cr in 'dishonest' funds from students

The Al Falah School of Medical Sciences and Research Centre, in Faridabad. Several of the 'white-collar' terror module doctors were associated with the varsity *PHOTO: PTI*

NEW DELHI, 19 NOV

A Delhi court on Wednesday remanded Al Falah Group chairperson Jawad Ahmed Siddiqui to 13 days' Enforcement Directorate (ED) custody after the agency alleged he had "incentives" to flee India, with close family members settled in the Gulf.

Siddiqui was arrested on Tuesday night following day-long searches on the group, associated individuals and the Faridabad-based Al Falah University, which is under probe in the 10 November Delhi blast case that killed 15 people.

The ED told the court that Siddiqui received at least Rs 415 crore in "dishonestly generated" funds collected from students of institutions run by his trust. He was produced before Additional Sessions Judge Sheetal Chaudhary Pradhan close to midnight, with proceedings stretching till 1 am.

Granting custody till 1 December, the judge noted that all legal compliances had been met and the investigation was at a "nascent stage".

The blast probe earlier revealed a 'white-collar' terror module involving 10 arrests, including three doctors. One of them, Dr Umar-un-Nabi of Al Falah's medical facilities, is suspected to have acted as a suicide bomber in the explosive-laden car that detonated near the Red Fort.

The ED, which registered its case on 14 November based on two Delhi Police FIRs, alleged the university and its trust induced students to pay fees on the basis of false claims of UGC recognition and NAAC accreditation, generating "proceeds of crime". The agency argued Siddiqui could abscond, influence staff or destroy records, given his control over the trust's institutions. His counsel maintained that he has been falsely implicated and the FIRs are "fabricated". *—PTI*

All Kashmiris being blamed: Omar

SRINAGAR, 19 NOV

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday said people from Jammu and Kashmir now feel anxious about travelling outside the Union Territory as they are being viewed with suspicion in the wake of the 10 November Delhi blast.

Speaking at an event in Kulgam, Abdullah said parents were increasingly wary of sending their children outside J-K. "When we are looked at with suspicious eyes from every side, when attempts are made to defame us for someone else's actions, when everyone is dragged into the ambit of what only a few have done, it naturally becomes difficult for us to leave home," he said.

He added that while it did not feel good to say so, "that is the reality". The chief minister stressed that only a handful of people were responsible for the Red Fort car explosion, yet "a perception is being created that we are all to blame".

Abdullah noted that even he hesitates before driving a vehicle with a J&K registration plate in Delhi. "When I am without my security personnel, I think twice about taking out my car." *—PTI*

AFTER WINNING ZERO SEATS

PK: Not contesting Bihar was a mistake

PATNA, 19 NOV

Jan Suraaj founder Prashant Kishor on Wednesday claimed that his decision not to contest the Bihar Assembly polls could be considered a "mistake", and said he had never expected that his party would get less than 4 per cent votes.

The party drew a blank in the recently held elections.

Kishor said, "We have to do a lot to achieve a satisfactory result. I had not anticipated this."

The former poll strategist also asserted that he would continue with his efforts to win elections in the future.

"I will not back down without winning elections in Bihar. I don't know how much time it will take," he said during the interview.

Kishor had on 18 November claimed that Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's JD(U) would have been limited to just 25 seats had his government not given Rs 10,000 to over 60,000 beneficiaries in each constituency just before the Assembly elections and promised Rs 2 lakh to 1.5 crore women across the state under a self-employment scheme.

He accused the NDA government of promising Rs 40,000 crore of people's money and rolling out a large chunk of it just ahead of the elections to attract votes. *—PTI*

Prashant Kishor *PHOTO: PTI*

Lalu's aide held for real estate fraud

NEW DELHI, 19 NOV

The Enforcement Directorate has arrested Amit Katyal, a real estate businessman considered close to RJD chief Lalu Prasad's family, in a money laundering case linked to alleged cheating of homebuyers in Gurugram. A special court in Gurugram sent him to six-day ED custody.

The investigation pertains to the allegations of non-delivery of flats in the Krrish Florence Estate built in Gurugram's Sector 70. The project was being developed by Katyal's company, Angle Infrastructure Pvt Ltd.

He was earlier arrested in a separate case related to the railways' land-for-jobs scam and chargesheeted in another for allegedly cheating homebuyers for Rs 500 crore. *—PTI*

VVPAT not needed for local poll: EC to Bombay HC

NAGPUR, 19 NOV

The Maharashtra State Election Commission on Wednesday told the Bombay High Court that the use of voter verifiable paper audit trail (VVPAT) machines was not mandatory for local body polls, and it was also not technically feasible.

The commission filed an affidavit opposing a petition filed by Congress leader Prafulla Gudadhe before the Nagpur bench of the high court, challenging its decision to not use VVPAT in the upcoming local body elections in Maharashtra.

Gudadhe in his plea said the VVPAT system was essential for a transparent election process.

The court sought to know the reason for not using VVPAT machines especially when a Supreme Court judgment said it's use was a must.

The commission's lawyer said that the SC judgment applied only to the general elections, and not local body polls. The Parliamentary and Assembly elections are single-member and single-post elections and the EVMs used by the Election Commission are specifically designed for that purpose, it said

SP TO CONTEST LOCAL BODY POLLS INDEPENDENTLY

The Samajwadi Party (SP) announced it will exit the Opposition's Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) alliance and contest the Maharashtra local body elections and independently.

The party will field candidates in 150 seats in the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation polls. *—PTI*

In TN, PM releases ₹ 18,000cr funds for nine crore farmers

COIMBATORE, 19 NOV

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday inaugurated the South India Natural Farming Summit 2025 in Coimbatore and released the 21st instalment of PM-KISAN, disbursing over Rs 18,000 crore to support nine crore farmers nationwide.

Addressing the gathering, Modi said India is poised to become the global hub of organic farming, stressing that traditional and native agricultural practices are central to this shift. Excessive use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides had reduced soil fertility, he warned, calling crop diversification and organic methods the sustainable way forward. Organic farming, he added, also strengthens the country's response to climate change.

In a light-hearted moment, Modi remarked that the crowd waving 'gamchas' on his arrival made it seem as though "Bihar winds" had reached Tamil Nadu ahead of him. The visit comes as the AIADMK-led NDA prepares to challenge the DMK-led coalition in next year's Assembly elections.

Modi paused his address to acknowledge two girl students waving placards, asking security personnel to bring them to him and praising the children. The Prime Minister held a roadshow in Coimbatore. He also visited Andhra Pradesh to pay tribute to Sri Sathya Sai Baba on the late spiritual leader's birth centenary, releasing a commemorative coin and set of stamps. *—PTI*

PM Narendra Modi greets actor Aishwarya Rai Bachchan during Sai Baba's birth centenary celebrations in Andhra Pradesh *PHOTO: PTI*

Rs7,000
credited to farmers as Andhra CM Naidu releases 2nd tranche of PM Kisan scheme. It is part of 'Super Six' set of welfare promises announced by TDP-led NDA government ahead of 2024 polls

- Modi said India is poised to become the global hub of organic farming and traditional agricultural practices are central to this

Centre says no to metro stand, Stalin calls it 'revenge'

CHENNAI, 19 NOV

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin on Wednesday hit out at the Centre for rejecting metro rail projects for Madurai and Coimbatore, calling the move an act of "revenge" against the people of the state.

The Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry reportedly returned Tamil Nadu's detailed project reports for the two Tier-II cities, citing the Metro Rail Policy, 2017, which restricts central support to urban agglomera-tions with a population of at least 20 lakh as per the 2011 Census.

Coimbatore and Madurai had populations of about 15.84 lakh and 15 lakh respectively in 2011.

Stalin noted that metro projects had been approved in cities such as Agra, Bhopal and Patna, which also fall below the 20 lakh norm but are located in BJP-ruled states.

The metro proposals are part of the government's effort to expand mass transit beyond Chennai. *—PTI*

POST OP SINDOOR

China ran disinfo campaign to hinder Rafale sales: US

WASHINGTON DC (US), 19 NOV

A new US assessment on Wednesday claimed that China "initiated a disinformation campaign" after the India-Pakistan conflict in May to block the sales of French Rafale aircraft and promote its J-35s, using "fake" social media accounts.

A report by the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission stated, "After the May 2025 India-Pakistan border crisis, China initiated a disinformation campaign to hinder the sales of Rafale and promote its J-35s, using fake social media accounts to propagate AI images of debris of the planes that China's weapons destroyed."

The report added that the Chinese Embassy officials "convinced Indonesia to halt the purchase of Rafales.

The report also highlighted a steady rise in China-Pakistan defence cooperation in 2024 and 2025.

"In November and December 2024, China and Pakistan held the three-week Warrior-VIII counterterrorism drills, and in February 2025, China's Navy participated in Pakistan's AMAN drills," the report said.

The report said that in June 2025, "China offered to sell 40 J-35 fifth-generation jets, KJ-500 aircraft, and missile defence systems to Pakistan."

"Pakistan has announced a 20 per cent increase in its 2025-2026 defence budget, raising outlay to USD 9 billion despite an overall budget decrease," the report added.

The assessment coincided with another development in Washington, where President Trump reiterated his claim that he had stopped eight wars, including the stand-off between India and Pakistan this year. *—ANI*

Chinese embassy officials reportedly convinced Indonesia to halt the purchase of France's Rafale jets *PHOTO: ANI*

99 pc of voters given enumeration forms in 12 states, UTs

NEW DELHI, 19 NOV

Around 50.35 crore of the nearly 51 crore electors in nine states and three UTs have received enumeration forms under the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, the Election Commission of India (ECI) said on Wednesday.

Phase two of the SIR exercise began on 4 November with the enumeration stage and will continue till 4 December.

The ECI said that over 50.35 crore enumeration forms have been distributed in the 12 states and UTs, that is, 98.79 per cent of the 50.97 crore electors have received the forms.

These states and UTs are Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, TN, UP, West Bengal, Puducherry, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and Lakshadweep.

Meanwhile, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday blasted the ECI after a BLO of Jalpaiguri district was found hanging, alleging that SIR is crushing field staff.

The BLO's family flagged the "unbearable pressure." The BJP blamed state officials. The deceased, Shantimuni Orao, 48, an anganwadi worker, was the BLO under the Rangamati panchayat *—PTI.*

'Discontent in Ladakh over talks with Centre'

JAMMU, 19 NOV

Ladakh Lieutenant Governor Kavinder Gupta admitted that some people are unhappy with what they see as "imbalanced" representation in the dialogue with the Centre, but expressed hope that all issues would be resolved through discussions.

He hailed the J&K Police for busting the white-collar terror network.

Speaking to PTI Videos on Wednesday, Gupta said the Leh Apex Body (LAB) and the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) had prepared a 29-page draft proposal of demands as a follow-up to the last meeting with the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) sub-committee.

However, he admitted that some people were upset with the representation "imbalance" in the talks with the Centre. "I have given my report to the MHA," he said.

Former president of the Ladakh Buddhist Association (LBA), Tondup Tsewang Chhospa, had recently voiced concern over the "imbalance in the composition of Ladakhi representatives" holding talks with the Centre regarding the region's demands for statehood and safeguards under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.

Chhospa said most of the representatives at the talks were Muslims, while Buddhists were under-represented. He warned that such an "imbalance" could limit the chances of the Buddhists' perspectives getting reflected in the dialogue process. *—PTI*

Kavinder Gupta *PHOTO: PTI*

Bhubaneswar's biggest slum razed for road

BHUBANESWAR, 19 NOV

The Odisha government is carrying out a major eviction drive in Salia Sahi, Bhubaneswar's largest slum, for the construction of a road to decongest traffic on the Jayadev Vihar-Nandankanan road. The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), Bhubaneswar Development Authority and other departments launched the eviction drive on 18 November in presence of police. 550 illegal houses were identified for demolition, of which over 80 were demolished on the first day. Several slum dwellers strongly opposed the drive and demanded a 600sqft area for the construction of their homes. However, BMC deputy commissioner (enforcement), Ajay Mohanty said the affected will be relocated and provided with Rs 1.50 lakh. *—PTI*

PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

Vulture 'Marich' returns to MP after 15,000km odyssey

VIDISHA, 19 NOV

'Marich', a Eurasian Griffon Vulture that took off from Halali Dam in Madhya Pradesh's Vidisha district in March, has returned to India unharmed after a 15,000km journey, a forest official said on Wednesday. The bird travelled through Pakistan, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, and is currently roaming in Rajasthan's Dholpur district, Vidisha DFO Hemant Yadav told PTI. The forest department has been tracking Marich with a satellite radio collar. Yadav said the device aids migration and conservation study, and all movements are monitored. Marich was found wounded at Nagaur village in Satna district on 29 January. It was initially treated at Mukundpur Zoo and later shifted to Bhopal's Van Vihar National Park. After two months of recovery, it was tagged and released from Halali Dam on 29 March. *—PTI*

Kerala boy accuses mother, stepfather of radicalising him

T'PURAM, 19 NOV

Police have initiated a probe into the allegations by a 16-year-old boy in Kerala's Thiruvananthapuram that his mother and stepfather had tried to make him join the banned terror outfit, ISIS, by showing him videos to radicalise him. The woman from Pathanamthitta had married a man from Vembayam after converting to his religion. A case under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) has been registered on the boy's complaint. According to the boy's complaint, he was shown the radicalising content while the family was living in the United Kingdom. "We are verifying the claims made by the boy. Further steps will be taken accordingly," a police official said. *—PTI*

Hindustan Copper worker dies in MP mine accident

NEW DELHI, 19 NOV

Hindustan Copper Ltd (HCL) on Wednesday reported that a contractual worker died in an accident at its Malanjkhand Copper Project in Madhya Pradesh. The incident occurred on 19 November, the state-owned company said in a filing to the BSE, adding it "deeply mourns the unfortunate death" and is completing mandatory procedures. The worker was employed by an external mining contractor. HCL, India's only integrated copper ore producer, handles exploration, mining and beneficiation to produce copper concentrate. The company operates mines at Malanjkhand, Khetri and Ghatsila and aims to raise its ore production capacity from 4 MTPA to 12.2 MTPA by 2030-31. *—PTI*

SC refuses 'protection' for RG Kar docs

Top court cites overwhelming caseload, suggests transferring matter to Calcutta High Court

NEW DELHI, 19 NOV

The Supreme Court on Wednesday said it cannot issue 'blanket orders' shielding doctors involved in protests after the rape and murder of a trainee at Kolkata's RG Kar Medical College and Hospital.

A bench of Justices MM Sundresh and Satish Chandra Sharma noted that any blanket order would amount to undue interference with police authority. Observing the matter cannot be heard 'piecemeal,' the court suggested transferring it to the Calcutta High Court.

A bench of Justices noted that any blanket order would amount to undue interference with police authority PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

"We are grappling with so many things and there is no end to this. It is easier for the Calcutta High Court to monitor protests. Is it possible for us to monitor the protests in Kolkata sitting in Delhi? How can we pass blanket orders protecting doctors? The police have a right to call you," the bench said orally.

Senior advocate Karuna Nundy, representing the Association of junior and senior doctors, submitted that protesting doctors faced repeated police harassment and sought protection. The court directed her to submit a table of pending matters before the Calcutta High Court.

Hearings will resume after winter vacations.

The trainee's body was found in the hospital seminar room on 9 August last year. Kolkata police arrested civic volunteer Sanjay Roy the next day. On 20 January, a trial court sentenced Roy to life imprisonment. The crime triggered nationwide outrage and prolonged protests in West Bengal.

The apex court, monitoring ancillary issues including unauthorised doctor absences, had earlier constituted a National Task Force (NTF) on 20 August, 2024, to develop safety protocols for medical professionals. The NTF reported in November that state laws, complemented by the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, were sufficient.

Initially probed by Kolkata police, the case was moved to the CBI after the Calcutta High Court expressed dissatisfaction with the probe. *—PTI*

SC urges to delay sports event in NCR amid air pollution

NEW DELHI, 19 NOV

The Supreme Court on Wednesday asked the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) to consider directing Delhi-NCR schools to postpone outdoor sports scheduled in November-December to safer months due to high pollution. Chief Justice of India BR Gavai and Justice K Vinod Chandran said children are most vulnerable, calling current conditions "like gas chambers." The bench also permitted stricter GRAP measures. Monthly monitoring of air quality and pollution mitigation strategies was ordered, while states were directed to ensure subsistence allowances for daily wage workers affected by GRAP restrictions. *—PTI*

SC pushes for uniform nat'l organ policy

NEW DELHI, 19 NOV

The Supreme Court on Wednesday directed the Centre to frame a national policy and uniform rules for organ donation and allocation in consultation with states.

A bench led by Chief Justice BR Gavai stressed transparency, efficiency, and gender- and caste-neutral criteria. States that have not adopted the 2011 or 2014 amendments to the Transplantation of Human Organs Act and Rules were told to comply. The court also sought State Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisations in underserved regions, safeguards against exploitation of live donors, and revised birth and death forms noting brain death and donation consent. The orders followed a PIL highlighting disparities and the need for a unified national database. *—PTI*

Interim bail to Jagtap in Elgar Maoist case: SC

NEW DELHI, 19 NOV

The Supreme Court on Wednesday granted interim bail to activist **Jyoti Jagtap**, arrested in 2020 in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case. A bench of Justices MM Sundresh and Satish Chandra Sharma passed the order after senior advocate Aparna Bhat highlighted that Jagtap has been in custody for over five years; advocate Karishma Maria also represented her.

Jagtap, an active member of Kabir Kala Manch, was accused of raising provocative slogans at the 31 December, 2017, Elgar Parishad conclave in Pune. The NIA claims KKM is a front for the CPI (Maoist). The high court had earlier dismissed her bail plea, noting prima facie evidence of conspiracy and abetment of a terrorist act linked to the Koregaon-Bhima violence on 1 January, 2018. *—PTI*

Mohd Ilyas acquitted in '96 Ghazibad bus bomb blast

PRAYAGRAJ, 19 NOV

The Allahabad High Court has set aside the conviction of Mohammad Ilyas in the 1996 Modinagar-Ghaziabad bus bomb blast case on the ground that the prosecution failed to prove the charges.

The court ruled that the convict's alleged confessional statement recorded by the police was inadmissible under Section 25 of the Evidence Act.

The court had earlier said that it was passing the order of acquittal "with a heavy heart" as the "terrorist" attack shocked the conscience of society, killing 18 people.

It said that the trial court committed a "great legal error" in relying upon an audio cassette carrying Ilyas' confession

On 27 April 27, 1996, a bus departed from Delhi with around 53 passengers and 14 more boarded it later.After crossing the Modinagar Police Station in Ghaziabad, a powerful explosion occurred, killing 10 people on the spot and injuring 48 passengers.

The prosecution alleged that the attack was executed by Abdul Mateen, alias Iqbal, a Pakistani national and alleged district commander of Harkat-ul-Ansar, in conspiracy with Mohammad Ilyas and Tasleem. In 2013, the trial court acquitted Tasleem but convicted Mohammad Ilyas and Mateen. *—PTI*

Kerala HC slams Sabarimala chaos

KOCHI, 19 NOV

The Kerala High Court on Wednesday sharply criticised State authorities and the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) for the severe crowd chaos at Sabarimala, saying the situation spiralled out of control due to poor coordination and inadequate preparedness.

The bench said several works should have been completed six months ago and questioned why an unusually large number of pilgrims were allowed into the temple precincts at once. It suggested dividing devotees into manageable sectors instead of pushing crowds in a single stream, calling the method unsafe.

New TDB chairman K Jayakumar admitted preparations should have begun months earlier. Nearly two lakh pilgrims reached the shrine within 48 hours of its 17 November opening, overwhelming officials. Visuals showed devotees packed near the 18 steps and the Pamba–Sannidhanam route, with crying children, long delays and some climbing barricades. Many complained of inadequate drinking water.

The Opposition Congress-led UDF accused the Left government of "deliberately mismanaging" the pilgrimage. Leader of the Opposition VD Satheesan said pilgrims waited up to 18 hours, faced water shortages, unclean toilets and pollution in the Pamba. He alleged indiscriminate inflow pushed the situation "to the verge of a stampede" and echoed concerns over poor coordination. Satheesan warned a UDF delegation would visit Sabarimala if corrective steps were not taken and said a proper probe into the shrine's gold loss case would implicate senior Devaswom officials. *—PTI*

Andhra anti-Maoist crackdown leaves 13 dead

AMARAVATI, 19 NOV

A major anti-Maoist crackdown across Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh this week has resulted in multiple encounters, significant arrests and renewed calls for extremists to abandon violence.

In Andhra Pradesh's Maredumilli region, 13 Maoists have been killed in two days. Six, including top commander Madvi Hidma, died in Tuesday's exchange of fire, followed by seven more on Wednesday, among them three women.

ADGP Intelligence Mahesh Chandra Laddha confirmed that one of the dead was Meturi Jokha Rao alias Tech Shankar, a long-time technical expert for the Andhra–Odisha Border division. Officials described Hidma's death as a decisive blow to the insurgency, given his leadership of the PLGA's most powerful battalion operating across Dandakaranya.

Following the encounters, Andhra Pradesh Police launched coordinated, intelligence-led operations across five districts, arresting 50 CPI (Maoist) cadres ranging from zonal committee members to regular operatives. Weapons, ammunition, explosives, communication devices and Rs 13 lakh in cash were seized.

PHOTO: ANI

Meanwhile, surrendered Maoist leader Mallojula Venugopal Rao (Bhupathi) issued a fresh appeal urging cadres to give up arms and join the mainstream.

In a separate incident, a Madhya Pradesh Hawk Force officer was killed in an encounter along the MP–Chhattisgarh border during an ongoing joint operation. *—PTI*

RAMESWARAM KILLING

TN stalker murders schoolgirl after she rejects his proposal

RAMESWARAM, 19 NOV

A 21-year-old youth was arrested on Wednesday for the alleged fatal stabbing of a Class 12 student who had repeatedly rejected his love proposal, police said.

The shocking incident which took place in Cherankottai near Rameswaram sparked strong political criticism over women's safety in Tamil Nadu.

Police identified the accused as Muniyaraj. According to the police, the youth had allegedly been stalking the teen despite warnings from her father, Mariyappan.

On Wednesday morning, he allegedly confronted her on her way to school and stabbed her multiple times on a public road. She died at the spot before help arrived.

Passersby alerted police, who recovered the body and sent it for post-mortem. A murder case was registered against the accused, and a special team later detained the accused under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

- The accused, Muniyaraj, allegedly confronted the girl on her way to school and stabbed her multiple times on a public road. She died at the spot before help arrived

Opposition parties strongly condemned the killing. AIADMK leader Edappadi K Palaniswami questioned how a schoolgirl could be murdered in broad daylight, alleging a "collapse of women's safety" under the DMK government and seeking maximum punishment.

PMK leader Anbumani Ramadoss said repeated pleas for police protection near schools and bus stops were ignored, blaming the DMK government for the "preventable" tragedy.

He further demanded a death sentence for the accused and Rs 25 lakh compensation for the family.

BJP State President Nainar Nagenthran said crimes against women remained rampant despite staging demonstrations, urging stronger measures to safeguard students and young women in the state. *—PTI*

Int'l cyber slavery network kingpin held in Gujarat

AHMEDABAD, 19 NOV

Gujarat Police have arrested Nilesh Purohit, alias Neel or The Ghost, the alleged kingpin of an international cyber-slavery network run by Chinese gangs from Myanmar and Cambodia.

He was caught in Gandhinagar while allegedly planning to flee to Malaysia. According to Deputy Chief Minister Harsh Sanghavi, Purohit operated a highly organised trafficking racket with over 126 sub-agents, supplying Indians and others to scam compounds abroad.

Victims were lured with promises of high-paying jobs via social media, had their passports seized, and were forced into cybercrimes such as phishing, crypto scams and Ponzi frauds.

Over 500 people from India and multiple countries were trafficked. Purohit earned up to Rs 3.7 lakh per recruit, using mule accounts and crypto wallets to hide the money trail. *—PTI*

HIGHEST PREVALANCE GLOBALLY

83% Indian patients carry drug-resistant bugs

NEW DELHI, 19 NOV

A new analysis of swab samples collected before endoscopy procedures has suggested that as many as 83 per cent of screened patients in India may be carrying multidrug-resistant organisms, one of the highest prevalence levels recorded globally.

The study, published in eClinicalMedicine, examined 1,244 patients from tertiary healthcare centres in the Netherlands, India, Italy and the United States between January, 2022, and October, 2024. Overall, 462 patients (37 per cent) carried a multidrug-resistant organism (MDRO).

Among the nearly 350 patients screened in India, 290 (83.1 per cent) were found harbouring an MDRO, the highest among the participating countries. Prevalence was lowest in the Netherlands (10.8 per cent), with intermediate rates in Italy (31.5 per cent) and the US (20.1 per cent), the authors, including researchers from AIG Hospitals in Hyderabad, noted.

According to the analysis, a patient in India may be about 100 times more likely to carry an MDRO than one in the Netherlands PHOTO: AI

The study said global variations reflect "underlying differences in antimicrobial resistance". It found extended-spectrum beta-lactamase-producing Enterobacterales to be the most common MDRO among Indian patients, while MRSA was detected mainly in the US cohort.

According to the analysis, a patient in India may be about 100 times more likely to carry an MDRO than one in the Netherlands. Conditions such as chronic lung disease, congestive heart failure and prior penicillin use significantly increased the risk. The authors said infection-control strategies and endoscope-related protocols must be tailored to local resistance patterns, not standardised globally, and called for pre-procedure screening and targeted measures within broader regional frameworks. *—PTI*

PM2.5 detrimental to arthritis patients in Delhi

NEW DELHI, 19 NOV

As Delhi's weather witnesses harsh winter colds marked by plunging temperatures and dense smog, physicians are warning of a dual threat to joint health.

Over recent weeks, arthritis consultations have risen across Delhi-NCR, though consolidated data remains unavailable. A 2025 study in the European Medical Journal reported that prolonged exposure to PM2.5 raises arthritis risk by 12–18 per cent, reinforcing concerns that toxic air and cold weather are worsening joint pain and inflammation.

Doctors note that winter chill tightens muscles, slows blood flow and contracts tissues around joints, intensifying stiffness in patients with Osteoarthritis (OA) and Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA). At the same time, inhaled pollutants trigger inflammatory pathways.

PHOTO: PTI

"Cold reduces blood supply around joints, while pollutants worsen swelling," said Dr Arvind Mehra of Paras Health. Max Healthcare's Dr Simon Thomas added that PM2.5 can enter the bloodstream and accelerate joint damage. Rheumatologists at IRACON 2025 urged integrated care, environmental vigilance and prompt medical attention during flare-ups. *—PTI*

THE FALL OF ICARUS

Astrophotographer Andrew McCarthy and musician-adventurer Gabriel C Brown created a striking image titled 'The Fall of Icarus'. Using a solar telescope, precise calculations and split-second timing, McCarthy captured Brown's silhouette as he leapt from a paramotor at about 3,500m. The picture is a nod to the Greek myth of Icarus, who flew too close to the sun and fell. McCarthy positioned his camera nearly 2 miles away to keep both the jumper and sun in focus ***PHOTO: X***

Can Cong bounce back after the Bihar drubbing?

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge and Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi during a meeting with senior Congress leaders from 12 states and Union Territories where the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls is underway, in New Delhi ***PHOTO: PTI***

The National Democratic Alliance (NDA), led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), scored a massive victory in the recent legislative assembly elections in Bihar, one of the country's poorest yet most politically influential states.

The state is home to nearly 130 million people and is seen as a political bellwether, setting political trends across the country's Hindi-speaking heartland.

Bihar controls the fourth-highest number of lawmakers to the lower house of parliament in New Delhi, making it politically powerful.

After two phases of polling on 6 and 11 November, results from the Election Commission of India showed the NDA secured a landslide win in the 243-member legislature, bagging 202 seats, with BJP alone taking 89.

The Congress, the nation's main Opposition party, won just six seats, its weakest showing in the state's history.

WHAT DID CONG SAY?

Prior to the elections, the Election Commission revised electoral rolls and removed nearly 10 per cent of the state's 74 million voters from the lists.

The commission said the revision was needed in the wake of large-scale emigration of laborers, young citizens becoming eligible to vote and non-reporting of deaths in the state.

But the Congress said the move disenfranchised poor and minority voters.

After the results were announced, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi called the elections "unfair."

"This result in Bihar is truly surprising. We could not achieve victory in an election that was not fair from the very beginning," Gandhi had said in a post on X.

Kapil Sibal, a senior lawyer and Opposition politician formerly associated with the Congress, accused the BJP of taking over key democratic institutions like the Election Commission.

"This institutional capture undermines the independence and credibility of these bodies, making it impossible to conduct free and fair elections," Sibal, currently an Independent MP, said.

CAN CONG COME BACK?

The election outcome in Bihar, nevertheless, suggests the Congress' campaign did not resonate widely with voters.

Political analysts say the Congress should address the party's structural and leadership failures. Some party insiders also shared a similar view, stressing the need for course correction and effective internal renewal.

The Congress party pledged to hold an inquiry to find out the reasons behind its poll debacle.

"This will serve as a wake-up call. We will introspect and see what needs to be done to regain voter trust, and craft a more impactful and credible political strategy," a senior party official, who asked not to be named, told DW.

BOOST FOR MODI

The Bihar election was viewed as a key popularity test for Modi.

By securing a victory, the BJP sought to build momentum ahead of key state polls in Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, and Tamil Nadu, among others, over the next two years, and national elections in 2029.

The landslide win also boosts Modi's federal government, which has governed without a full parliamentary majority since last year's national election. This configuration has forced the BJP to rely on regional allies.

Since the national election, however, the BJP has won most major state elections.

The BJP and its coalition partners currently rule most of India's 28 states and eight federally administered territories.

Meanwhile, the Congress — which ruled India for over 60 years after independence from the British Empire in 1947 — holds power in just three states in the world's most populous nation.

RETHINKING ALLIANCES?

Radhika Ramaseshan, a senior political analyst, said the Congress needs to build stronger alliances with regional parties to counter the BJP's dominance.

"The Congress is in recession, having lost all the key elections in states that voted after the 2024 parliamentary polls," she said.

Rasheed Kidwai, political commentator and visiting fellow at the Observer Research Foundation in New Delhi, said that the Congress' utter failure in Bihar is "emblematic of its overall decline, lack of ideology, leadership, and grassroots connect."

He called for a rethink of the party's future direction.

"The Congress must take responsibility for its poor performance in Bihar by fostering genuine, cohesive alliances with regional partners," said Kidwai. "Ultimately the party needs to set its internal house in order and act with humility to remain relevant against the BJP." *—DW News*

SALAR

When Indira Gandhi edited English translation of Tagore's 'Ekla Chalo Re'

Indira Gandhi had sharp literary sensibilities, which were betrayed in an edit job she did on an English translation of the iconic Rabindranath Tagore poem 'Ekla Chalo Re', Congress leader Jairam Ramesh said on Wednesday, the former prime minister's 108th birth anniversary.

Ramesh, the party's general secretary and in-charge, communications, said Indira Gandhi had a special relationship with Tagore, having spent some nine months at Shantiniketan during July 1934-April 1935. "She was an annual visitor to Visva-Bharati."

In the last month of her extraordinary life, she had a wonderful exchange with one of her closest aides, HY Sharada Prasad, on Tagore's poem 'Ekla Chalo Re', which was her favourite, Ramesh recalled.

He shared on X an article written two years ago and which spoke about her "sensitive and diligent" edits on the Bengali writer's work.

"Tagore's iconic poem Ekla Chalo Re was not only Indira Gandhi's favourite, it also brought out her latent literary sensibilities. Her sensitive and diligent edits on an English translation of the work was found in the archives of her long-time press adviser HY Sharada Prasad, along with other memorabilia," read the article by Sanjiva Prasad, son of Sharada Prasad.

"In the last month of her life, Indira Gandhi, my father, and the noted sculptor Sankho Chaudhuri had several interactions. One of the last executive actions of Indira Gandhi, on 30 October, 1984, was to approve the appointment of Sankho Chaudhuri as the Chairman of the Lalit Kala Akademi," Prasad wrote.

"While the veteran politician Ram Niwas Mirdha had won the most votes in an election for the post, he had the good sense and cultural sensibilities to suggest that one respected artist should succeed another as Chairman of the arts academy.

"But a more interesting interaction that took place over the month centred on a translation of Tagore's memorable song 'Jodi tor dak shune keu na ashe' that contains the memorable phrase 'Ekla Chalo', which inspired Indira Gandhi. However, the translations of this poem did not seem to satisfy her exacting standards," the article read.

"My father had on several occasions said that Indira Gandhi worked tirelessly on her speeches and would have made an excellent sub-editor. He also maintained that her intellect and education were of the highest calibre, with leading writers and philosophers like Iris Murdoch and Andre Malraux seeking out her company. How particular she could be about words and their meaning can be seen here," Prasad wrote, and gave an account of the changes and suggestions made by Gandhi for the English translation of the work.

"...I do not know who the little girl reader was that Indira Gandhi had in mind or whether her version of Tagore's great poem-song ever got published, but looking at her painstaking work on the poem, one can appreciate her literary sensibilities," he wrote. *—PTI*

Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar pay tribute to former PM Indira Gandhi on her 108th birth anniversary at the KPCC office in Bengaluru ***PHOTO: MOHAMMAD ASAD***

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

How will India's new DPDP rules reshape personal data?

In simple terms, 'data fiduciaries' refer to entities that decide the purpose and means of processing the data belonging to a particular individual while 'data principals' refer to individuals or users (of a particular service) to whom the personal data belongs.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

India's DPDP rules have set a framework for a more accountable digital economy through clear consent standards, data safeguards, with the goal to arm individuals with greater control over their personal data in the world's fourth largest economy.

These subordinate rules to the principal legislation -- Digital Personal Data Protection Act -- spell out operational norms for entities in collection and handling of personal data, and protects the rights of individuals.

In simple terms, 'data fiduciaries' refer to entities that decide the purpose and means of processing of individual's data while 'data principals' are individuals or users (of a particular service) to whom personal data belongs.

Consent notice to individuals: Companies must give clear, plain-language notice seeking informed consent with itemised data description, processing purpose, complaint mechanisms, and easy consent withdrawal process where ease of withdrawal is comparable to the ease with which such consent was given.

Obligations of consent manager: 'Consent manager' enables individuals to give, manage, or withdraw consent for processing their personal data by any authorised organisation on the platform.

The latest rules spell out the criteria and registration process for such consent managers, their duties, and conditions for suspension or cancellation by the Data Protection Board, in the interests of individuals.

Reasonable security safeguards: Organisations must implement encryption, access control, monitoring, logging, backup, contractual safeguards to protect data, prevent data breaches and ensure data security.

In the event of personal data breach, companies must promptly inform affected individuals in clear terms about the details, potential consequences, mitigation efforts, recommended safety actions, and provide contact information for any queries.

Companies must immediately notify the Data Protection Board with initial breach details, and then within 72 hours provide an updated comprehensive report detailing causes, impact, mitigation, any finding about perpetrators, and the remedial measures to prevent recurrence of such incidents.

Experts say companies will need to implement appropriate data security safeguards across all systems handling Indian personal data.

"Coupled with steep penalties of up to Rs 200 crore for reporting failures and the stringent 'without delay' notification requirement, organisations will likely need to operationalise a round-the-clock incident response functions," according to JSA Advocates and Solicitors.

Erasure notifications and data retention: E-commerce entities (minimum 2 crore users in India), online gaming companies (minimum 50 lakh users in India), and large social media platforms (minimum 2 crore users in India) will be required to erase personal data after three years of user inactivity or dormancy, except in two cases specified in rules or where retention is mandated by law.

Companies must notify the users at least 48 hours before personal data erasure. Irrespective of the category, companies will have to retain personal data and associated logs for a minimum period of one year from the date of data processing.

Guardianship consent and child data protection: Verified parental consent would be needed for processing child data. Companies will have to ensure the parent is an identifiable adult (18 years or above) through reliable identity or authorised digital tokens before processing the child's personal data.

Certain healthcare, educational entities and specific child-safe processing purposes have been exempt from some data protection obligations under specified conditions. The rules also spell out guardian consent norms for processing data of a person with disability.

Significant data fiduciary audits: The rules require data fiduciary to annually conduct a data protection impact assessment and audit.

Large scale digital platforms must exercise due diligence to verify that technical measures, including algorithmic software used for processing, do not pose a risk to the individual's rights.

These data collectors must also undertake measures to ensure that certain personal data, those specified by the government, is not transferred outside the territory of India. This potential restriction will be based on the recommendation of a committee constituted by the central government.

While the impact assessment concept mirrors elements of the General Data Protection Regulation under European laws, the significant data fiduciary (SDF) designation introduces a far more intensive, India-specific compliance burden, says JSA Advocates and Solicitors.

Once classified as an SDF, an organisation needs to operationalise annual assessments and audits, implement ongoing algorithmic risk assessments, and prepare for the possibility of strict data-localisation obligations for categories of personal data that may be notified by the government.

Cross-border data transfer: The DPDP framework permits transfer of personal data outside India, subject to central government restrictions via notifications specifying limitations for sharing data with any foreign state or entities under their control.

"For businesses, this could mean faster and lower-cost international data flows," it added.

Transition time: The DPDP rules come into effect through a staggered timeline, allowing 18 months for companies processing personal data to shift to the new regime.

The provisions around Data Protection Board, which will be responsible for overseeing enforcement and implementation of the DPDP Act and its rules, including handling complaints, conducting inquiries, and ensuring compliance with data protection obligations -- come into force immediately.

The consent manager framework activates after 12 months, and compliance obligations like user consent notices, security safeguards, data rights, and breach notifications will be applicable after 18 months.

This gradual rollout provides companies necessary time to align with new requirements, say experts. *—PTI*

Pregnant Indian woman killed in Australia crash

MELBOURNE, 19 NOV

An Indian techie who was eight months pregnant died along with her unborn baby after she was hit by a car in Sydney. Samanvitha Dhareshwar, 33, was walking with her husband and their three-year-old son along George Street in Hornsby shortly after 8 pm local time on Friday last week when a Kia car slowed at the entrance of a carpark to let the family pass. Moments later, the Kia was rear-ended by a BMW, causing it to surge forward and hit the woman, police said. Emergency services treated Dhareshwar, who was just weeks away from giving birth to her second child, at the scene before she was rushed to Westmead Hospital in a critical condition, where she and her baby died, police said. *—PTI*

Taiwan row: China to suspend Japan seafood imports

TOKYO, 19 NOV

China is expected to ban imports of Japanese seafood again as a diplomatic dispute between the two countries escalates, according to Japanese media reports. NHK and the Kyodo News agency said on Wednesday that China had earlier this month lifted import restrictions on Japanese marine products, which were imposed by Beijing in 2023 after the release of treated radioactive water from Japan's crippled Fukushima nuclear plant into the sea. Kyodo News said China has told Japan that the re-imposition of the ban was due to the need for monitoring of the water from Fukushima released into the Pacific Ocean. The ban comes after Japanese PM Sanae Takaichi said that a Chinese attack on Taiwan could trigger a military response from Tokyo. *—Agencies*

Texas Guv brands 2 Muslim groups as terrorists

HOUSTON, 19 NOV

Texas Governor Greg Abbott has designated two Muslim groups as foreign terrorist organisations and has barred them from purchasing land in Texas and authorising legal action to shut down any associated operations. In a statement on Tuesday, Abbott said the Muslim Brotherhood and the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) "support global terrorism and subvert our laws." He said the move to designate these two groups as terrorist organisations was intended to protect Texans from extremists trying to impose their agendas. While CAIR was set up to advance American Muslim civil rights and has been a vocal critic of US government policy in the Gaza conflict, the Muslim Brotherhood is a transnational Sunni Islamist movement established in Egypt. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Protect Nigerian Christians, urges rapper Nicki Minaj

UNITED NATIONS, 19 NOV

Rapper Nicki Minaj took up President Trump's allegations that Christians are persecuted in Nigeria, saying Tuesday at an UN event organised by the US that she wants to draw attention to the "deadly threat." Trump had said that Christianity faces an "existential threat" in Nigeria and has told the Pentagon to begin preparing for military action. Experts say some attacks target Christians but emphasise that in the violence that has long plagued the West African nation, everyone is a potential victim. The Trinidadian-born Minaj thanked Trump for urging urgent action. Pope Leo XIV said on X on Sunday that Christians are being killed in Nigeria, Bangladesh, Mozambique and Sudan. *—PTI*

Don defends Saudi Prince over scribe's killing in 2018

Trump discredits US intel; Salman says Osama soured ties

Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and US President Donald Trump in the Oval Office; Tech tycoon Elon Musk and footballer Cristiano Ronaldo attend Trump's dinner party for the Prince **PHOTO: PTI**

WASHINGTON, 19 NOV

President Donald Trump on Tuesday dismissed US intelligence findings that Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman likely had culpability in the 2018 killing of Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi as Trump warmly welcomed the de facto ruler of Saudi Arabia on his first White House visit in seven years.

The US-Saudi relationship had, for a time, been sent into a tailspin by the operation targeting Khashoggi, a fierce critic of the kingdom.

But seven years later, the dark clouds have been cleared away. Trump, in his defence of the of the 40-year-old crown Prince derided Khashoggi as "extremely controversial" and said "a lot of people didn't like that gentleman." Prince Mohammed denies involvement in the killing of Khashoggi, who was a Saudi citizen and Virginia resident.

"Whether you like him or didn't like him, things happen," Trump said. "But (Prince Mohammed) knew nothing about it."

But US intelligence officials determined that the Saudi crown prince likely approved the killing by Saudi agents of US-based journalist inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul. The findings were declassified in 2021 at the start of the Biden administration.

The crown Prince also announced Saudi Arabia was increasing its planned investments in the US to USD 1 trillion, up from USD 600 billion that the Saudis announced they would pour into the United States when Trump visited the kingdom in May.

He said that 9/11 key accused Osama Bin-Laden had driven a knife through the US-Saudi relations, as he addressed some of the controversy over his visit to Washington.

"We must focus on reality. Based on CIA documents, Osama Bin Laden used Saudi people at that event for one main purpose -- to destroy this relation, to destroy the American-Saudi relation," he said.

The visit comes as Trump is trying to nudge the Saudis toward normalising relations with Israel.

"We want to be part of the Abraham Accords, but we want also to be sure that we secure a clear path of a (Palestinian) two-state solution," Mohammed said. *—PTI*

Revoke ABC's licence: Don snaps at Epstein question

NEW YORK, 19 NOV

Trump called ABC News' Mary Bruce a "terrible reporter" and threatened the network's broadcast license after she asked him three sharp questions at the White House.

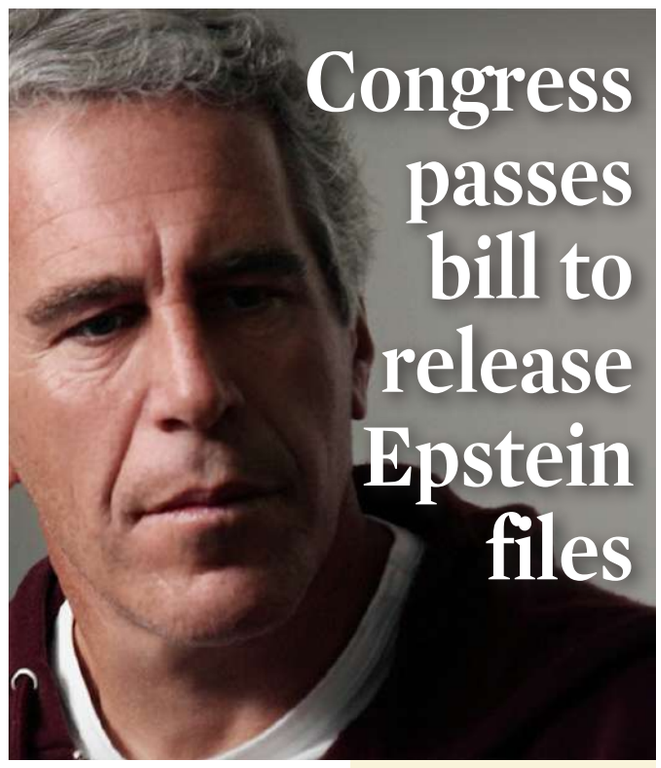
She asked Trump whether it was appropriate for his family to be doing business in Saudi Arabia while he was President.

Before Trump could answer, she directed a question to the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman: "US intelligence concluded that you orchestrated the brutal murder of a journalist. 9/11 families are furious that you are here in the Oval Office. Why should Americans trust you? And the same to you, Mr President."

Trump called ABC "fake news" and defended his family's business operations in Saudi Arabia.

Trump criticised Bruce for asking the Prince a "horrible, insubordinate and just a terrible question." He laced into her after a third query, about why the White House is waiting for congressional action to release the Epstein files.

"It's not the question that I mind," Trump said. "It's your attitude. I think you are a terrible reporter. It's the way you ask these questions.... I think the license should be taken away." *—PTI*



Congress passes bill to release Epstein files

WASHINGTON, 19 NOV

Both the House and Senate acted decisively Tuesday to pass a bill to force the Justice Department to publicly release its files on the convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, a remarkable display of approval for an effort that had struggled for months to overcome opposition from President Donald Trump and Republican leadership.

The bill forces the release within 30 days of all files and communications related to Epstein, as well as any information about the investigation into his death in federal prison. It would allow the Justice Department to redact information about Epstein's victims or continuing federal investigations, but not information due to "embarrassment, reputational harm, or political sensitivity." It now awaits Trump's signature.

A separate investigation conducted by the House Oversight Committee has released thousands of pages of emails and other documents from Epstein's estate, showing his connections to global leaders, Wall Street powerbrokers, influential political figures and Trump himself.

"These women have fought the most horrific fight that no woman should have to fight. And they did it by banding together and never giving up," said Rep Marjorie Taylor Greene as she stood with some of the abuse survivors outside the Capitol Tuesday morning. Greene and Trump had a public fall out over the Epstein files. *—PTI*

Mexico says no to US military strikes on cartels

Mexico's President ruled out allowing US strikes against cartels on Mexican soil, a day after US President Donald Trump said he was willing to do whatever it takes to stop drugs entering the US. "It's not going to happen," President Claudia Sheinbaum said. "He (Trump) has suggested it on various occasions... But I have told him on every occasion that we can collaborate.... but we operate in our territory, (and) do not accept any intervention by a foreign government."

Russia launched more than 470 attack drones and 48 missiles of various types against Ukraine overnight **PHOTO: X @ZELENSKYYUA**

'US working on Ukraine peace deal akin to Gaza'

WASHINGTON/ MOSCOW/ KYIV, 19 NOV

The Trump administration is secretly working in consultation with Russia for a ceasefire plan for the Ukraine war, Axios reported. The plan bears similarities to the Gaza ceasefire plan, the report said, citing both American and Russian sources.

While it is unclear how it deals with issues like territorial concession, the 28-point draft plan reportedly has taken inspiration from Trump's 20-point peace deal in Gaza.

The Ukraine plan is centred around four themes: peace in Ukraine, security guarantees, security in Europe, and future US relations with Russia and Ukraine. Officials said that Trump's envoy Steve Witkoff is leading the drafting of plan and has spoken to Russian envoy Kirill Dmitriev.

RUSSIA KILLS 19 IN UKRIANE

A large Russian drone and missile barrage killed 10 people and injured dozens more in Ukraine overnight, officials said Wednesday, as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was due in Turkey for talks. The nighttime attack hit two nine-story apartment blocks in Ternopil, a city in western Ukraine. At least 66 people, including 16 children, were injured. Zelenskyy said he would meet with Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan as part of his efforts to isolate Russian President Vladimir Putin.

UK DETECTS RUSSIA SPY SHIP

The UK issued a stark warning to Russia over a spy ship it said was operating north of Scotland as Britain said it would step up munition production. —Agencies

Yunus gave LeT free reign, says Hasina's son

VIRGINIA, 19 NOV,

After the ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina was convicted of "crimes against humanity" in Bangladesh and sentenced to death, her son, Sajeeb Wazed, questioned the "legitimacy" of the Muhammad Yunus-led interim government in Dhaka.

He attacked Yunus for not holding and election and issued a word of caution to India.

"What should really concern India, which is propping up the Yunus regime is Jamaat-e-Islam, which is the largest Islamic party," he said. "They (Yunus govt) have released tens of thousands of terrorists that our government had convicted and sentenced to prison. They've released them. Lashkar-e-Taiba is operating freely now... They've taken credit and links have been found to their branch in Bangladesh for the recent terror attacks in Delhi. Prime Minister Modi is probably very concerned about terrorism from Bangladesh right now."

He slammed Yunus for allegedly aligning more with China, while claiming that the uprising which ousted his mother was funded by the former US president Joe Biden's administration, something that President Donald Trump has asserted.

"President Trump himself announced at a press conference earlier this year that the previous administration, through USAID, spent millions of dollars on regime change in Bangladesh," Wazed said. *—ANI*

Destroyed buildings in the Gaza Strip are seen from southern Israel **PHOTO: PTI**

Israel kills 11 Palestinians in Lebanon

SIDON, 19 NOV

An Israeli airstrike on a Palestinian refugee camp in southern Lebanon on Tuesday killed 11 people and wounded four, state media and the Lebanese health ministry said.

State-run National News Agency reported that the drone strike hit a car in the parking lot of a mosque in the Ein el-Hilweh refugee camp on the outskirts of the coastal city of Sidon.

The Health Ministry said 11 people were killed and four wounded in the airstrike, without giving further details.

The Israeli military said it struck a training center for Hamas adding that the place struck was used to prepare attack against the Israeli army.

Israeli also warned two villages in southern Lebanon to evacuate close to what it said are Hezbollah sites. *—PTI*

Clashes break out between Nepal's Gen Z, political party

KATHMANDU, 19 NOV

A curfew was imposed in parts of Nepal's Bara district bordering India on Wednesday after Gen Z youths clashed with cadres of CPN-UML, the party of ousted prime minister KP Sharma Oli, officials said.

The clash erupted when a Buddha Air flight carrying CPN-UML General Secretary Shankar Pokharel and party youth leader Mahesh Basnet was to take off from Kathmandu for Simara, where they were scheduled to address an anti-government rally.

As news spread, Gen Z protesters gathered at the airport to oppose their arrival, triggering a clash with local CPN-UML cadres.

The Bara district administration office said the curfew would remain in force from 12.30pm to 8.00pm within a 500-metre radius of Simara Airport after hundreds of Gen Z youths gathered there, shouting slogans against the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist–Leninist).

The CPN-UML has been organising programmes demanding reinstatement of the House of Representatives, which dissolved on 12 September following the Gen Z movement. *—PTI*

CLIMATE COOPERATION

UN COP30 publishes draft Belem Political Package

An Indigenous activist carries an image of a monkey at a climate protest during the COP30 UN Climate Summit, in Belem, Brazil **PHOTO: PTI**

BELEM, 19 NOV

- The COP30 Presidency has published 11 draft documents which are expected to be adopted on Wednesday after deliberations.

The final phase of negotiations at the UN COP30 Climate Summit began on 18 November with the release of the draft Belem Political Package, which is expected to guide the next steps in global climate action.

COP30 President Andre Correa do Lago urged all nations to work "side by side, in task-force mode" to finalise the package.

The draft texts are expected to be adopted on Wednesday after deliberations.

Negotiators from over 190 countries are attending the annual Conference of Parties (COP) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), being held in Belem in Brazil's from 10-21 November.

The COP30 Presidency has published 11 draft documents across issues including climate-related trade restrictions, the synthesis report on Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and the 1.5-degree Celsius ambition and implementation gap, while six topics remain under negotiation.

In the draft titled Global Mutirao: uniting humanity in a global mobilisation against climate change, the Presidency proposed acknowledging climate change as a common concern of humankind and urged parties to uphold human rights obligations while taking climate action.

It commended the 123 countries that have submitted new NDCs for the next policy cycle.

The draft Belem package calls on all actors to work together to scale up climate finance for developing countries to at least USD 1.3 trillion per year by 2035. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Gold climbs ₹1,500 to ₹1.27/10g on safe-haven buying

MUMBAI, 19 NOV

Gold prices jumped Rs 1,500 to Rs 1,27,300 per 10 grams in Delhi on Wednesday, tracking a sharp global rally, the All India Sarafa Association said. Silver also rebounded, rising Rs 4,000 to Rs 1,60,000 per kg, ending a three-day losing streak. Analysts said renewed safe-haven buying and signs of weakness in the US labour market boosted bullion, keeping hopes of a US rate cut alive. Spot gold climbed USD 46.32, or 1.14 per cent, to USD 4,114.01 per ounce, extending gains for a second session ahead of the FOMC minutes. Softer US employment data and expectations of delayed macro releases supported the uptrend. Spot silver rose 3.09 per cent to USD 52.26 per ounce in global trade.*—PTI*

Rupee settles at 88.58 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 19 NOV

The rupee closed 2 paise higher at 88.58 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday, aided by buying momentum in domestic equity markets and lower crude oil prices overseas. A strong American currency and outflow of foreign capital prevented a sharp gain in the rupee even as investors were concerned about the progress on the proposed India-US trade deal. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 88.57 and hit an intra-day high of 88.41 against the greenback. The domestic unit settled the day at 88.58 (provisional) against the dollar, logging a gain of 2 paise from its previous closing level. On Tuesday, the rupee settled at 88.60.*—PTI*

Auto industry moves govt over Rs 2,500 cr relief

NEW DELHI, 19 NOV

Auto industry representatives are understood to have taken up with the government the issue of Rs 2,500 crore compensation cess credits arising out of GST 2.0 regime in their pre-Budget meeting. Representatives from the auto industry, including Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM), in their meeting with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on 18 November, sought a resolution of the matter citing genuine concerns of dealers, which are mostly small and medium enterprises. The accumulated compensation cess lapsed on 22 September with new GST norms coming into effect. In October, the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations moved the Supreme Court seeking relief over Rs 2,500 crore worth of compensation cess credits.*—PTI*

Oil India joins TotalEnergies for deep-sea mining

NEW DELHI, 19 NOV

Oil India Ltd (OIL) has partnered with French energy major TotalEnergies to boost exploration of oil and natural gas in deep and ultra-deepwater regions. The technology service agreement, signed on 19 November in New Delhi, enables OIL to tap TotalEnergies' expertise for ongoing and future offshore projects, including government-mandated stratigraphic wells. The collaboration spans appraisal of OIL's recent shallow-water gas discovery in the Andaman Basin and exploration in ultra-deepwater blocks in the Mahanadi and Krishna-Godavari Basins. TotalEnergies will also support evaluation of the Vijayapuram-2 find and advise on opportunities in upcoming exploration rounds.*—PTI*

Adani wins nod for $1.53B takeover of Jaiprakash Associates

MUMBAI, 19 NOV

Adani Enterprises has secured creditor approval for its Rs 135 billion (USD 1.53 billion) takeover proposal for bankrupt infrastructure conglomerate Jaiprakash Associates, edging out a higher offer from Vedanta, according to Reuters.

Creditors, largely Indian banks, opted for Adani's bid despite Vedanta's Rs 170 billion proposal, as Adani offered significantly larger upfront payments, a key factor for stakeholders. Vedanta's plan involved a longer five-year payout period, compared with Adani's 1.5–2-year timeline, one official said. The officials requested anonymity as the discussions are private.

Other bidders in the race included Dalmia Bharat, Jindal Power and PNC Infratech. Controlling shareholder Manoj Gaur had also entered a last-minute bid, later withdrawn, one of the officials added. Jaiprakash Associates, once among India's largest infrastructure groups, owes creditors Rs 550 billion. Insolvency proceedings began last June and the case is now one of the country's largest ongoing bankruptcies. The National Asset Reconstruction Company (NARCL), which acquired JAL's loans from a consortium led by State Bank of India, is the lead claimant in the resolution process. Meanwhile, shares of Jaiprakash Power Ventures (JP Power) surged 9 per cent intraday on Wednesday amid reports favouring Adani's acquisition of JAL. The stock hit Rs 19.25 on the NSE and BSE before easing to Rs 18.63 by 11.50 am, still over 5.5 per cent higher. Analysts have said that an Adani-led revival could benefit both JAL and JP Power, in which Jaiprakash Associates holds a 24 per cent stake.
—Agencies

Double standards: SC flays CBI, SEBI over Indiabull case

Questions 'reluctance' to even file FIR, pulls up Centre too

NEW DELHI, 19 NOV

Supreme Court on Wednesday criticised CBI, SEBI and Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) for their "reluctance" to investigate allegations of "dubious transactions" involving Indiabulls Housing Finance Limited (IHFL), now renamed Sammaan Capital.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant, Ujjal Bhuyan and N Kotiswar Singh directed the CBI director to convene a meeting with officials from SEBI, the Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to examine all allegations raised by the NGO Citizens Whistle Blower Forum, represented by advocate Prashant Bhushan. The court clarified that the MCA's earlier compounding of multiple offences allegedly committed by IHFL should not impede any fresh probe.

Seeking further accountability, the bench asked the Delhi Police Commissioner to produce original ED complaints relating to the case and to explain why the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) declined to pursue them. Justice Kant remarked, "We are surprised to see that CBI has adopted a very cool attitude in this case. We have never seen such a friendly approach." He stressed that the matter concerned "public money" and said that even if "10 per cent of allegations are correct", the transactions appeared "dubious".

PHOTO: PTI

The judges questioned why no FIR had been registered so far, noting that filing one would "strengthen the hands of the ED, SFIO and SEBI". They also criticised the MCA for its decision to close the matter, asking, "What is their interest in this?"

Bhushan alleged large-scale irregularities at IHFL, claiming the company advanced loans to entities linked to major corporate groups, which then routed the funds back to promoter-related companies to boost personal wealth.

He further claimed that former promoter Sameer Gehlaut, who he said now lives in London, was acquiring high-value assets including a plane, a yacht and a bungalow.

The hearing took a sharper turn when a counsel for SEBI cited lack of jurisdiction to investigate. Justice Kant responded strongly, saying, "When it comes to taking over properties and selling them, you say you are the only authority. But when it comes to investigation, you shy away. Why—because your officers have some vested interest?" He further pointed to alleged inconsistencies in SEBI's conduct, recalling a case where a property worth Rs 30 crore was auctioned for just Rs 2 lakh. "You say you don't have power. Why are your officers getting a salary if you do not have power?" he asked.

IHFL has denied all allegations and said multiple regulators, including the RBI, MCA, SEBI, ED, CBI and EOW, had reviewed the issues and found no wrongdoing.

The matter will be heard next on 3 December. *—PTI*

30L SHARES TO BE AUCTIONED

Groww shares hit 10% lower circuit after 90% gain

MUMBAI, 19 NOV

Shares of Billionbrains Garage Ventures, the parent company of stockbroking platform Groww, tumbled 10 per cent on Wednesday, hitting the lower circuit at around Rs 169.9 after a blistering surge since listing. The correction comes as investors appeared to book profits following four straight sessions of sharp gains.

The company made its market debut on 12 November with a 14 per cent premium at Rs 114 on the BSE. The stock then skyrocketed nearly 94 per cent over its IPO price within five sessions, touching a high of Rs 193.9. Even Monday's scorching 11 per cent jump to Rs 193.8 on the NSE, before giving up part of the gains, kept the counter firmly in the spotlight.

On Tuesday, the company informed exchanges it would hold its earnings call on 21 Friday, alongside a board meeting to consider unaudited results for the quarter and half-year ended 30 September 2025.

However, the real churn unfolded in trading data. Over 30 lakh Groww shares reportedly moved into the NSE's auction window on Tuesday, an unusually large quantity that analysts said signalled a sizeable delivery failure. The auction window, used to resolve shortages when sellers cannot deliver shares, suggested that several traders had short-sold the stock expecting a quick cool-off.

Instead, Groww's relentless rally trapped these traders, who were unable to arrange shares for delivery as prices surged.

Market watchers said the squeeze underscored the strong buying interest that has persisted since listing.
—PTI

OP SINDOOR FALLOUT

AI knocks at PMO's door for China route, ₹4,000 cr relief

NEW DELHI, 19 NOV

Air India has approached the Indian government to request access to restricted military airspace in China's Xinjiang region to shorten international flight paths, according to a Reuters report quoting an internal company document. It has also sought Rs 4,000 cr subsidy to offset its heavy losses.

The airline has been struggling with higher operational costs after Pakistan closed its airspace to Indian carriers.

The appeal follows shortly after India-China flights resumed after a five-year suspension.

Fuel expenses have risen by up to 29%, while journey times on certain long-haul routes have increased by as much as three hours. The airline estimated the restriction could cost $455 million per year, exceeding its reported fiscal 2024-25 loss of $439 million.

PHOTO: PTI

Air India is seeking alternative routes that would include emergency access to airports at Hotan, Kashgar, and Urumqi in Xinjiang, with the goal of improving connections to the US, Canada, and Europe.

The airspace targeted by the airline falls under the jurisdiction of China's People's Liberation Army Western Theater Command, which controls military assets and shares some airports with civilian flights.

The Pakistani airspace closure has already forced Air India to stop routes like Delhi-Washington in August, and evaluate others.

If granted, the Hotan route could significantly reduce fuel consumption, shorten flight times, and help restore passenger and cargo capacity cut by up to 15% on routes, lowering weekly losses by around $1.13 million. *—Agecnies*

With shares to Carlyle, SpiceJet trims ₹442 cr debt

MUMBAI, 19 NOV

Domestic carrier SpiceJet on Wednesday said it has completed the allotment of equity shares to global aircraft leasing and financing firm Carlyle Aviation Partners (CAP), a move that has reduced its liabilities by Rs 442.25 crore (USD 50 million).

The allotment follows a September 11 agreement under which CAP agreed to restructure lease dues amounting to USD 121.18 million, enabling the airline to secure liquidity worth USD 89.5 million.

The pact also includes a mechanism whereby, if lessors realise proceeds above USD 50 million from the sale of the allotted shares, a portion of the excess will be used to offset future lease obligations.

SpiceJet said its board's Allotment Committee, at a meeting on November 18, approved issuing 10,41,72,634 equity shares of face value Rs 10 each at an issue price of Rs 42.32 per share, including a premium of Rs 32.32, on a preferential basis under the non-promoter category.

The agreement further entitles the airline to USD 79.6 million in cash maintenance reserves for future aircraft and engine upkeep, along with USD 9.9 million in maintenance credits to offset lease liabilities.

SpiceJet last week reported a net loss of Rs 635.42 crore for the September quarter of the current fiscal.
—PTI

Sensex jumps 513 points, Nifty climbs 142.6 pts

MUMBAI, 19 NOV

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty bounced back sharply on Wednesday, driven by a rally in IT stocks and sustained buying from domestic institutional investors amid growing hopes for an India-US trade deal.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 513.45 points, or 0.61 per cent, to settle at 85,186.47.

The benchmark surged 563.75 points, or 0.66 per cent, to 85,236.77.

The 50-share NSE Nifty climbed 142.60 points, or 0.55 per cent, to 26,052.65.

From the Sensex pack, HCL Tech, Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services, Hindustan Unilever, Sun Pharma and Titan were among the biggest gainers.

Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles, Maruti, Adani Ports and Bajaj Finance were among the laggards.
—PTI

Samsung crosses Rs 1 lakh crore revenue mark

NEW DELHI, 19 NOV

Samsung India Electronics reported over 11 per cent growth in revenue from operations, rising to Rs 1.11 lakh crore in FY25 from Rs 99,541.6 crore. This is the first time the company's operational revenue has crossed the Rs 1 lakh crore milestone.

Samsung's mobile phone division remained its biggest contributor, alongside TVs, tablets, home appliances and computers. It is also the only firm in India's appliances and consumer electronics segment to exceed the Rs 1 lakh crore turnover mark. Competitors Apple India and LG Electronics posted revenue increases of 18 per cent and 14.25 per cent, respectively. *—PTI*

IT officials inspect Waaree offices

NEW DELHI, 19 NOV

Income Tax officials have conducted investigations across multiple offices and manufacturing facilities of Waaree Energies, the company said on Tuesday. The solar manufacturer, already under scrutiny in the US over alleged duty evasion on imported equipment, said it is fully cooperating with the department.

In its stock exchange filing, Waaree said officials visited several locations to carry out inquiries under the Income Tax Act, 1961, and that proceedings remain underway. The firm had earlier stated it would continue assisting US authorities probing customs violations. Waaree Solar Americas, its US subsidiary, runs a 1.6 GW plant in Texas, currently being expanded to 3.2 GW. *—PTI*

Apple adds theft, loss cover to AppleCare+ in India

MUMBAI, 19 NOV

Apple on Wednesday announced the addition of theft and loss protection for devices in India under its AppleCare Plus cover, bringing the plan in line with offerings available in several of its major global markets. Earlier, AppleCare Plus in India only covered unlimited repairs for accidental damage.

The revamped plan also introduces a flexible monthly payment option starting at Rs 799, alongside the existing annual subscription. AppleCare+ with Theft and Loss for iPhone will also begin at Rs 799, though the final cost will vary depending on the device model and category. The company's latest iPhone 17 series is priced between Rs 82,900 and Rs 2,29,900, and the revised plans are expected to appeal to users looking to safeguard higher-value devices.

Apple has also extended the window for customers to opt into AppleCare Plus, allowing subscription within 60 days of purchasing a device, instead of only at the time of sale. Subscribers will continue to receive battery replacement, and unlimited accidental damage repairs. *—PTI*

FOR UNLIMITED 5G USERS

Gemini 3 AI now available for free to Jio users

NEW DELHI, 19 NOV

Jio has upgraded its AI portfolio by integrating Google's latest Gemini 3 model into the Jio Gemini Pro Plan, which will now be available free for 18 months to customers on its Unlimited 5G data plans. The plan, valued at Rs 35,100, can be activated instantly through the MyJio app via the 'Claim Now' banner.

The company said the addition of Gemini 3 significantly strengthens the Jio Gemini proposition, offering users more advanced AI capabilities at no extra cost. Google has described Gemini 3 as its "most intelligent model," engineered for deeper reasoning and a more nuanced understanding of complex prompts. According to Google, the model can better interpret context and user intent, reducing the need for elaborate prompting and providing more dynamic, interactive outputs.

Google said Gemini 3 in AI Mode will debut in Search with enhanced reasoning and richer experiences. The model is also being rolled out to the Gemini app, AI Studio, Vertex AI and Google's new development platform, Antigravity.

The offer signals Jio's push to drive AI adoption among its user base by delivering a premium AI model bundled with its 5G ecosystem at no additional cost. *—PTI*

Google has described Gemini 3 as its 'most intelligent model', engineered for deeper reasoning **PHOTO: X**

Prannoy, Ayush & Mannepalli enter 2nd round of AO

HS Prannoy PHOTO: PTI

SYDNEY, 19 NOV

Five Indian shuttlers, including Lakshya Sen and HS Prannoy, dished out impressive performances to reach the men's singles second round at the USD 475,000 Australian Open Super 500 event here on Wednesday.

Tharun Mannepalli, a semi-finalist at the Macau Open, overcame Denmark's Magnus Johannesen 21-13, 17-21, 21-19 in a 66-minute battle. The 2023 National Games gold-medallist will face fifth seed Lin Chun-Yi of Chinese Taipei.

Lakshya, a 2021 World Championships bronze-medallist, outplayed Chinese Taipei's Su Li Yang 21-17 21-13, while Prannoy, a runner-up here in 2023, recovered from a poor opening game to beat world No. 85 Yohanes Saut Marcellyno 6-21 21-12 21-17 in 57 minutes in the first round match. Commonwealth Games champion Lakshya will next face either Chi Yu Jen or Wang Tzu Wei. The 33-year-old Prannoy, an Asian Games bronze-medallist and a 2023 World Championships bronze winner, will meet eighth seed Alwi Farhan of Indonesia.

World No. 32 Ayush Shetty, who claimed his maiden Super 300 title at the US Open earlier this year, eased past Canada's Sam Yuan 21-11, 21-15 in 33 minutes. The 20-year-old from Karnataka, a bronze-medallist at the 2023 World Junior Championships, will take on fourth seed Kodai Naraoka of Japan. Veteran Kidambi Srikanth, a 2021 World Championships silver-medallist, also advanced after outlasting world No. 20 Lee Chia Hao of Chinese Taipei 21-19 19-21 21-15 in a 64-minute contest. Srikanth, who finished runner-up at the Malaysia Masters earlier this year, will next play either Japan's Shogo Ogawa or Edward Lau.

Kiran George put up a spirited fight before going down 21-11, 22-24, 17-21 to sixth seed Kenta Nishimoto, who had beaten Lakshya en route to the final at the Japan Masters last week. —*PTI*

Tharun Mannepalli PHOTO: PTI

PHOTO: PTI

Rohit's brief reign at top ends, drops down to 2nd place

DUBAI, 19 NOV

Indian star Rohit Sharma dropped down to second place after a brief reign at the top with New Zealander Daryl Mitchell dislodging him in the ICC ODI batters' rankings issued on Wednesday. Mitchell became the second New Zealander to hold the No.1 spot for ODI batters on the back of an excellent century against the West Indies. He scored his seventh ODI century during the opening game in the series against the Caribbean side, and that proved enough for the in-form right-hander to overtake Rohit at the top and claim the premier position for the first time in his career. Mitchell currently has 782 rating points, one more than Rohit, whose reign at the top spot lasted around three weeks.—*PTI*

New Zealand clinches series against West Indies

NAPIER, 19 NOV

Another New Zealand-West Indies game, another last-over finish, another heartbreak for West Indies. For the longest time, the stars seemed to be aligning for the West Indies. After Hope's unbeaten 69-ball 109 took them to 247 for 9 in the rain-reduced 34-overs-a-side contest, the visitors would have fancied their chances. And they were in this, particularly when New Zealand found themselves at 194 for 5, needing another 54 runs off 29 balls. Mitchell Santner came clutch and took New Zealand to a five-wicket win, giving them an unbeatable 2-0 lead in the three-match series. New Zealand 248 for 5 (Conway 90, Ravindra 56, Latham 39*, Santner 34*, Greaves 1-35) beat West Indies 247 for 9 (Hope 109*, Smith 4-42, Jamieson 3-44) by five wickets —*PTI*

Mumbai, J&K complete formalities to notch easy wins

Mumbai beat Puducherry by an innings and 222 runs

MUMBAI, 19 NOV

Mumbai needed just over half an hour to complete the formalities as they beat minnows Puducherry by an innings and 222 runs on the final day to top Group D in Ranji Trophy here on Wednesday.

Following on after conceding a mammoth 498-run first innings lead to their formidable opponents, Puducherry added just 45 runs in 8.3 overs for the loss of four wickets on the fourth morning to be all out for 276. Puducherry were staring at a defeat after beginning the day on 231 for 6. Tushar Deshpande scalped two wickets while captain Shardul Thakur and Ayush Mhatre got one each as Mumbai got the job done in quick time. Mumbai collected seven points from their third win, while Puducherry got none. Mumbai topped Group D with 24 points ahead of Jammu and Kashmir (20 points) after playing five matches each.

Mumbai's players celebrate a wicket during the Ranji Trophy match against Puducherry, Abid Mushtaq spun J&K to an incredible win PHOTO: PTI

Shardul Thakur PHOTO: PTI

India all-rounder and Mumbai captain Shardul Thakur on Wednesday said that playing a few white-ball matches between red-ball fixtures during the domestic season helps players stay mentally fresh. Thakur also gave a thumbs up to the current scheduling of the Ranji Trophy, which is being held in two phases for the second consecutive season. He had earlier criticised the packed itinerary of the premier domestic competition, which offered only three-day gaps between matches.

J&K hammer Hyderabad

In Jammu, Abid Mushtaq spun J&K to an incredible win as Hyderabad were bowled out for 190 while chasing 472. It was Jammu & Kashmir's third win. The wrecker-in-chief was the left-arm spinner Abid Mushtaq, who finished with figures of 7 for 68. It was his ninth five-wicket haul in first-class cricket. With Hyderabad losing their remaining three second innings wickets in 5.2 overs while adding just 21 runs. They had resumed the day at 169 for 7. Mushtaq picked all three wickets to add to his earlier four in the Hyderabad second innings. Jammu & Kashmir collected six points from the win, while Hyderabad got none. Rajasthan take points for a first-innings lead. At Rajsamand, hosts Rajasthan tried their best to eke out a result on the final day, but a determined batting effort from Delhi forced their Group D clash into a draw. Delhi reached 316 for seven in their second innings following on, having extended their lead to 42 runs overall after making 296 in the first innings.

Brief Scores:

In Mumbai: 630/5 decl in 147 overs beat Puducherry 132 and 276 all out in 53.3 overs (Aman Khan 86; Shardul 2/24, Tushar Deshpande 3/32).In Jammu: Jammu and Kashmir 170 & 422 all out in 100.5 overs beat

2ND TEST AGAINST SA

Gill arrives in Guwahati with Team India

NEW DELHI, 19 NOV

The Indian and South African cricket teams reached Guwahati on the eve of the second and final Test, setting the stage for a high-stakes contest after India's defeat in the series opener. The atmosphere at the airport reflected the intensity surrounding the match, with fans gathering in large numbers to welcome both sides as they arrived for what promises to be a decisive encounter.

Indian captain Shubman Gill travelled with the squad, as earlier confirmed by the BCCI through an official press release. His presence drew considerable attention, given the uncertainty surrounding his fitness following the neck injury he sustained during the first Test in Kolkata. The BCCI reiterated that while Gill has joined the team as planned, "a decision on his participation in the 2nd Test will be taken accordingly."

Gill is not exactly fit but desperate to play

Shubman Gill has travelled to Guwahati with the rest of the India squad for the second Test against South Africa, but the neck injury that is on the mend is unlikely to fully heal before the game begins here on Saturday.However, it is understood that the skipper will try his best to prove his fitness during training sessions on Thursday and Friday. The squad has landed in the city.If sources in the Indian team are to be believed, the 26-year-old Gill is far from being 100 per cent fit, with the pain in the nape of his neck still lingering, although its intensity has reduced considerably."Shubman has been responding well to the medical treatment provided and will travel to Guwahati with the team on 19th November, 2025," read a statement from BCCI secretary Saikia. —*PTI*

Shubman Gill PHOTO: PTI

PHOTO: PTI

Federer elected to International Tennis Hall of Fame

DUBAI, 19 NOV

Roger Federer was elected to the International Tennis Hall of Fame in his first year of eligibility, the Rhode Island-based Hall announced Wednesday. The first man to win 20 Grand Slam singles titles, and part of an era of unprecedented greatness with rivals Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic during what Federer termed "a golden time for tennis" he was the only candidate to receive enough support in the player category for the Hall's class of 2026. The Hall does not reveal voting results. TV announcer and journalist Mary Carillo, who was also a player, was elected in the contributor category.—*PTI*

Bashir in 12-man squad for Ashes opener

SYDNEY, 19 NOV

England named off-spinner Shoaib Bashir in a 12-man squad on Wednesday alongside four frontline pace bowlers, keeping its options open for the first Ashes Test against Australia in Perth. There was no room for speedster Josh Tongue, with Brydon Carse preferred, while Ollie Pope kept his place at number three ahead of Bethell. Veteran pace ace Mark Wood unleashed a fiery spell in the nets on Tuesday after an injury scare last week to prove his fitness. But selectors are likely waiting until the last minute to make a call on whether he plays. If England opts for an all-out pace attack on what is expected to be a lively wicket.The first Test starts on Friday. —*PTI*

Rinku Singh PHOTO: PTI

Rinku sizzles with career-best 176

COIMBATORE, 19 NOV

Known for his ability to pull off last-over miracles in T20S, the swashbuckling Rinku Singh on Wednesday showed his wares in the long-form game with a career-best 176 to help Uttar Pradesh secure the vital first-innings lead against Tamil Nadu in their Ranji Trophy game here.

The Group A clash ended in a draw on the fourth and final day, with visiting UP receiving three points after amassing 460 all out in response to Tamil Nadu's first-innings total of 455.

The home team got one point from the game.That UP managed to take a slender five-run lead was largely due to Rinku's knock and some useful contributions from the lower-order batters, including Shivam Mavi's 54.Rinku smashed 17 fours and six sixes during his stay in the middle. He was batting on 98 at stumps on the third evening and faced a total of 247 balls across two days.At a time when the Indian team is struggling to play spin in Test matches at home, Rinku's knock assumes significance as it offers the national selectors an option they can explore going forward.

Vidarbha complete a big win after Nalkande's 5/12In the group's other big match, former champions Vidarbha completed a facile 144-run win over Baroda after pacer Darshan Nalkande's career-best figures of 5/12 in Nagpur. Vidarbha grabbed full six points from the outright win to consolidate their numero uno position in the standings. The result was a forgone conclusion after Vidarbha left visiting Baroda in all sorts of trouble at 73 for five at stumps on the third evening, with the 27-year-old Nalkande doing the bulk of damage with four top-order wickets.

CHESS WORLD CUP

Indian challenge ends as Arjun loses to Wei Yi in QFs

PANAJI, 19 NOV

India's final hope at the FIDE World Cup in Goa bowed out on Wednesday as the 20-year-old grandmaster fell to China's Wei Yi in the rapid tiebreaks of a tense quarter-final showdown. The classical portion of their match had been a cagey affair. Two games, two draws, and barely an inch offered by either side.

That meant everything came down to Wednesday's rapid tiebreakers: 15 minutes each, a 10-second increment per move, and absolutely no room for nerves. How The Tiebreaks Unfolded, Erigaisi held with Black in the first rapid game. But in the second, with White and a spot in the semifinals on the line, he faltered. Wei Yi pounced with clinical precision, taking the game and the match.

Arjun's end of the road means that there can be only one Indian in the Candidates in R Praggnanandhaa who will likely make it to the premier event with his well-rounded performances throughout this year.

Results quarterfinals: Yakubboev (Uzb) beat Alexander (Ger) 1.5-0.5; Arjun Erigaisi (Ind) lost to Wei Yi (Chn) 1.5-2.5; Andrey Esipenko (Fid) beat Sam Shankland (Usa) 4-2. —*PTI*

Arjun Erigaisi went down to China's Wei Yi in the quarterfinals on Wednesday PHOTO: PTI

U-19 tri-series: Afghanistan crushes India-B by 71 runs

NEW DELHI, 19 NOV

Afghanistan produced an all-round show to defeat India-B by a margin of 71 runs in the second one-day match of the U-19 Tri-Series, also involving India-A, here at the Centre of Excellence Ground on Wednesday.

After being bowled out for 168 in 45.2 overs, in which Naman Pushpak claimed 4/45 in his 10 overs, Afghanistan U-19 came back strongly to win the contest and take the top spot.

India-B, which had lost to the 'A' side in the first match, is languishing at the bottom of the table with two consecutive defeats.

Ishan Sood (8-0-24-2) was impressive for India B with the ball, but a fine 58 (76 balls, 7x4s) from Afghanistan No. 3 Faisal Shinozada and Azizullah Maikhil's 42 took the Afghans to 168. —*PTI*

SA-A beats India-A by 73 runs; loses series 1-2

RAJKOT, 19 NOV

Teen batting sensation Lhuandre Pretorius stole the show with a scintillating hundred as South Africa A came up with an all-round performance to earn a consolatory 73-run win over India A in the third unofficial ODI here on Wednesday.

Besides Pretorius (123 off 98 balls), his opening partner Rivaldo Moonsamy also struck a fine century (107 off 130 balls) while sharing 241 runs to help South Africa post a formidable 325 for six in the allotted 50 overs.

In reply, India A were all out for 252 in 49.1 overs.

India A never got a partnership going, and barring Ayush Badoni's run-a-ball 66 and Ishan Kishan's 67-ball 53, none of the home team batters could make a mark in the stiff chase of 326.

The duo of Badoni and Kishan joined forces with India A in a spot of bother at 82 for four in 17 overs. But after having added 88 runs, Kishan, seeking to make a case for a return to India's white-ball teams, was sent back by Nqabayomzi Peter (4/48), who also dismissed Badoni to signal the end of India A's resistance.

India lost three wickets in quick succession, with Badoni and Rana falling to Peter on consecutive deliveries.

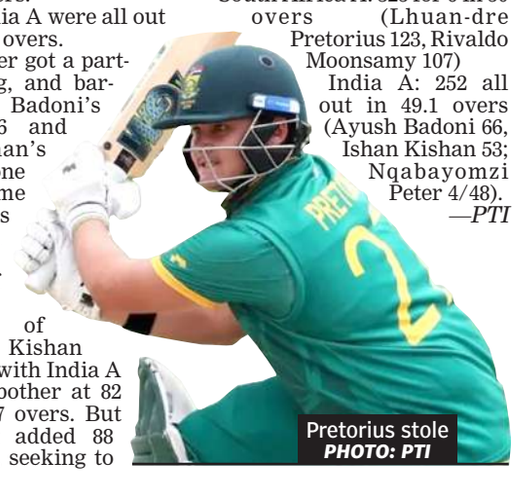
For India, Harshit Rana, Prasidh Krishna and Khaleel Ahmed took two wickets each at the Niranjan Shah Stadium.

India won the first two games of the three-match series.

Brief scores:

South Africa A: 325 for 6 in 50 overs (Lhuan-dre Pretorius 123, Rivaldo Moonsamy 107)

India A: 252 all out in 49.1 overs (Ayush Badoni 66, Ishan Kishan 53; Nqabayomzi Peter 4/48). —*PTI*


Pretorius stole PHOTO: PTI

WORLD CUP 2026

Curacao smallest nation to qualify

KINGSTON, 19 NOV

Curaçao salvaged a 0-0 draw with Jamaica to become the smallest nation by population to qualify for a World Cup, and will be joined by CONCACAF sides Panama and Haiti, which also booked their spots.

Curaçao finished as the only undefeated nation in the tournament and finished atop Group B with 12 points to advance to the World Cup for the first time in its history on Tuesday night. Curacao got the historic result it needed despite not having its coach, Dick Advocaat, on the bench. The 78-year-old Advocaat missed the crucial match because he had to return to the Netherlands last weekend for family reasons. Advocaat was at the helm of the Netherlands national team for three stints and managed South Korea, Belgium, and Russia before taking the job with Curacao. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics in Curaçao, the country has a population of 156,115 persons as of last January. Iceland, with a population of just over 350,000, was the smallest country to reach the World Cup when it qualified for the tournament in Russia in 2018.

Curacao players pose for a team group photo before the 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifier PHOTO: X/@THE-BLUE-WAVEFFK

Iraq scores late winner against UAE

Iraq kept its 2026 World Cup hopes alive by beating the United Arab Emirates 3-2 on aggregate after a dramatic stoppage-time penalty in Asian qualifying. Amir Al-Ammari's penalty in the 17th minute of added time sealed the 2-1 victory Tuesday night to send Iraq to the intercontinental playoff round in March. The teams had drawn 1-1 in the first leg in Abu Dhabi. —*PTI*

INDIAN WINNER

India's Nikhat Zareen, after being declared the winner in the women's 51kg semi-final match against Uzbekistan's Ganieva Gulsevar, unseen, at the World Boxing Cup Finals 2025, in Greater Noida PHOTO: PTI